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PATTY THORNES ADVENTURES

BY

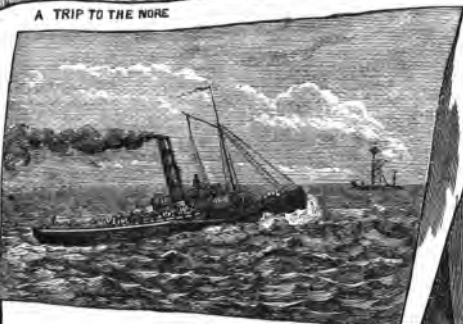
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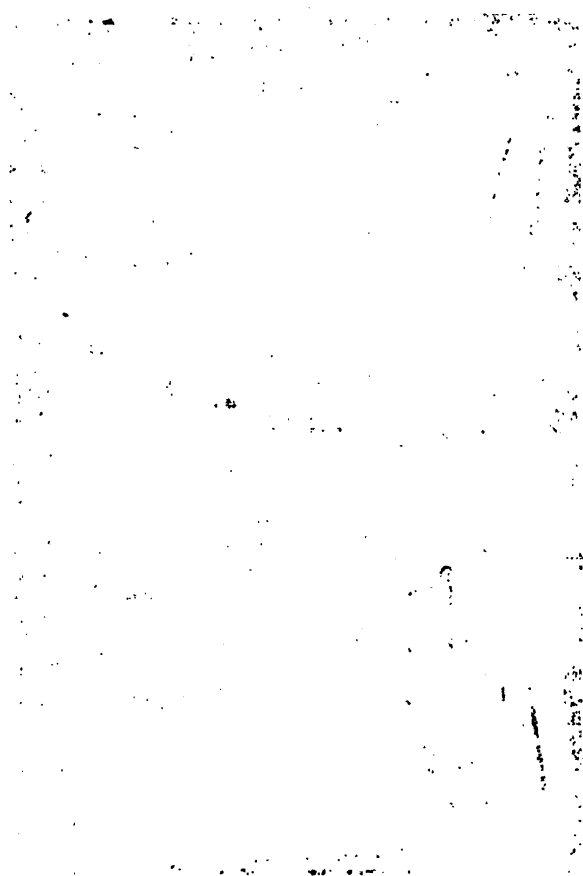




A TRIP TO THE NORE



JOHN THORNÉ'S COTTAGE



PATTY THORNE'S ADVENTURES.

BY

MRS. H. B. PAULL,

AUTHOR OF 'TOM FLETCHER'S FORTUNES,' 'BREAKING THE RULES,'
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PATTY THORNE'S ADVENTURES.



CHAPTER I.

PATTY AND HER FATHER.

 MOTHER, do you think it will be fine to-morrow?' And as she spoke, a bright, rosy girl of ten bounded out through the little garden, and stood for a few moments at the gate, looking up into the blue sky, as if she expected to find there an answer to her inquiry.

'Are you looking for clouds, Patty?' said a pleasant voice at her side; 'the haymakers might perhaps be glad of one or two by and by.'

'O mother, I do hope, if the clouds are coming at all, that they will come to-day instead of to-morrow, so that it may be fine for our treat.'

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'I hope so too, Patty,' replied Mrs. Thorne; and then, placing her arm round her child's shoulders, she added, 'Looking for clouds will not keep them away; and, besides, breakfast is ready, so come in at once, for I shall want you to stay with your dear father while I go to market this morning; you know he cannot be left alone.'

The bright, rosy face became clouded at these words, and Patty seated herself at the homely table and ate her breakfast in silence. Although the blue sky on this June morning might be cloudless, yet a heavier cloud hung over the dwellers in that pretty rustic cottage. John Thorne, the husband and father, was dying of consumption; his dear wife had only for a few moments thrown off the gloom, which not even the lovely summer weather could disperse, to sympathize with her child's delighted anticipation of a happy day on the morrow. Patty too well understood that at her father's death she would be fatherless and her mother a widow; but, with the hopefulness of childhood, she soon threw off the dread of his death, as an event not perhaps likely to happen yet, especially while the weather continued so fine and warm. She was also happy in the knowledge that on this summer day her father appeared much better; and when her mother started on her marketing expedition, she had

perfect confidence in her child's careful attention to the father so dearly loved.

Perhaps a more worthy specimen of an honest, industrious working man did not exist within twenty miles of the village of Prittlewell, in Essex, than John Thorne. His wife also, in their humble cottage home, merited in every respect to be ranked among the number of Solomon's notable women. For many years of their married life John and Sarah Thorne had known few sorrows, save the loss of three infant children. Patty was now their only child, and had been trained and cherished with the tenderest care; perhaps a little too much indulged, especially by her father, whose devoted love she returned with all the warmth of her loving heart.

At the time of his marriage with Sarah Martin, John Thorne had been under-gardener on the estate of Sir Edward Wentworth, who owned a beautiful seat not far from the village of Prittlewell, and near the flourishing town of Southend-on-Sea, now becoming a seaside watering-place of some celebrity. Sir Edward greatly valued the services of his honest, upright, and industrious gardener; and, when John married, he not only increased his wages, but gave the young people a pretty white cottage on his estate, and several useful articles of furniture. Sarah, who

had also been under-housemaid at Leigh Court, treasured highly these gifts from their kind master ; but when, in addition, he gave them a piece of ground behind the cottage to cultivate, rent-free, their gratitude knew no bounds.

Such was the home of Patty Thorne ; and the teaching and training she received from both parents was founded on Bible precepts, and therefore on principles of rectitude and honourable conduct. At the time of which we write Board Schools were unknown ; and so, although Patty could read and write well, and boast of being able to conquer a sum in the Rule of Three, she had not been carried very far into the mysteries of science, or the refined studies of music and drawing. In needlework Patty was an adept. Such instruments as sewing-machines were then considered derogatory to a clever needlewoman ; and Patty would often describe, with amused satire, the untidy length of cotton trailing, unknown to the wearer, from a dress, when the broken thread set free the chain-stitch to the extent of several yards. Sewing-machines are more perfect now ; yet Patty Thorne in after life always preferred her needle, thimble, and fingers.

Mrs. Forest, the elder sister of Sarah Thorne, when gossiping with a friend, used often to speak of her,

though not unkindly, as 'a very lucky woman.' If a gossip is free from scandal and slander, it becomes a pleasant and harmless conversation; and yet it is well to remember Solomon's words: 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin;' and also, 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;' and if the heart is evil, the words uttered will be evil also. Mrs. Forest, not being quite so much under the influence of religious principles as Sarah and her husband, certainly did love a gossip; and the expected Sunday school treat formed a leading topic of conversation.

'Your children are going to the school treat, I suppose?' said Jane Thomson one morning when she met Mrs. Forest at the grocer's.

'Of course they are! four of them—Fred and the three girls; and I hope they'll enjoy themselves.'

'And my girl tells me Patty Thorne is going in a new white frock too.'

'Well, her mother can afford it,' replied Mrs. Forest. 'Just look at my sister, with only one child, and a cottage and garden, and chickens, and new-laid eggs, and a piece of ground where they keep a cow. Why, John and Sarah are far better off than many of the gentry, with all their grand houses.'

'Ah, well, you needn't complain,' said Jane Thomson. 'You've a pretty little shop in Prittlewell, and that pays the rent, if it does nothing else, besides your husband's wages.'

'I don't complain,' was the reply. 'God has been very good to me, and although I have got six children to feed, and clothe, and educate, it would break my heart to lose one of them.'

'I'm sure Sarah Thorne is to be pitied,' remarked a new customer, who had entered the shop and stood listening. 'The doctor says there's no hope of John's recovery.'

'Ah, yes, I know that,' said Mrs. Forest; 'but I'm sure Sir Edward will take care of Sarah and Patty; he'll never take away the cottage from her.'

'Does Sarah think so?' asked the new comer.

'She won't say what she thinks,' was the reply. 'And now I must get what I want quickly, and no mistake, or my husband's dinner won't be ready in time.'

It will be seen by these snatches of talk that a slight feeling of envy had arisen in the minds of these simple-hearted villagers with regard to John and Sarah Thorne. But lately the fiat had gone forth that he must die. Twelve months ago, throwing off his jacket while at work beneath a hot sun,

and with the wind in the east, he had taken a chill, and a feverish attack laid him aside for weeks. In the autumn he recovered sufficiently to resume his work, but as Christmas drew near a fresh cold settled on his lungs, and the news soon spread that John Thorne was in a rapid consumption, and given up by the doctors.

And now the dying man is sitting up in bed supported by pillows, and tended by his darling little daughter, who is preparing for him a cup of beef tea and toast with the order and carefulness of a girl double her age. Patty, brought up with grown people, and being an only child, had acquired, to a certain extent, their thoughts and manners; yet to her father she could be a pleasant and amusing companion, especially when they were alone.

The sunny sky without a cloud had a cheering influence on the invalid, and Patty thought him so much better that she brightened up with the hope that after all he might recover. No sooner had she finished her task, than she climbed on to the foot of the bed, and, sitting Turkish fashion, commenced a conversation with her dearly loved father. The cottage contained two rooms and a kitchen. The front door opened into the sitting-room, and the casement windows were fastened back to their widest

extent. The summer air, laden with fragrance and the scent of new-mown hay, pervaded the house, adding freshness to the atmosphere, and softening the heat of a June day.

Patty, encouraged by her father's cheerful appearance and the absence of his cough, at once referred to the subject uppermost in her thoughts.

'Father, do you think it will be fine to-morrow?'

'To-morrow? Ah, yes, that is your Sunday school treat day, isn't it, pet?'

'Yes,' she replied; 'and don't you know, we're all going in a steamboat to the Nore! We're to take our dinners with us, and mother's gone early to market to get lots of nice things for our tea.'

'And who will take care of you, my child? I can't spare dear mother, you know;' and John Thorne placed his thin white hand on Patty's as he spoke, and sighed at the thought that never again would he lead his darling child to church or for a pleasant walk, far less accompany her in an excursion by steamboat, to which she was now looking forward with excitement and delight. Patty's reply interrupted his musings:

'Aunt Ellen is coming for me to-morrow, with my cousins Fanny, and Sarah, and Ellen. Fred is going

with his class, and his teacher will take care of him ; but he's a great boy, and I'm sure he can take care of himself.'

'Upon my word, it will be a grand affair,' said John, smiling at his little daughter's enthusiasm. 'You will have to tell me all about it next day. And now, is it not time for me to take my beef tea ? And do you know, Patty, I quite believe it will be a fine day to-morrow for your excursion !'

'O father, I'm so glad !' she exclaimed, sliding quickly but gently to the floor ; 'because you know so much about the weather.'

And then away went the little old-fashioned child to prepare the necessary refreshment for her sick father. In a very few minutes it was brought to him on a little tray covered with a neat cloth, while she stood by him, watching with earnest interest the quickness with which the simple nourishment vanished. Presently the click of the garden gate gave notice that Mrs. Thorne had returned from market, and, as the mother raised the rosy face and kissed it, Patty exclaimed :

'O mother, father says it's almost certain to be a fine day to-morrow, and I'm so glad !'



CHAPTER II.

FRED'S NEW JACKET.

SIR EDWARD WENTWORTH, the owner of Leigh Court and the estate which surrounded it, was one of those courteous and refined gentlemen of the olden time now so seldom met with. At the age of fifty he had lost none of the brightness and vigour of the prime of life, and entered heart and soul into any plan proposed for the benefit of the workers on his estate, or the interest of the villagers, who were mostly his tenants. In the parish he was a valuable friend, and a worker with the rector and his curate, especially in the Sunday schools of the village; and these annual excursions were not only patronized by Sir Edward, but also handsomely subscribed to by him.

The long-expected day dawned at last, and without a cloud; and Patty Thorne, who had been up an

hour, busily helping her mother in the cottage, heard the old Dutch clock in the kitchen strike eight with great satisfaction.

‘I may change my frock now, mother, mayn’t I?’ she asked; ‘and put on all my things excepting my hat and cape? We’ve got to be at the schools by nine punctual. Please do let me get ready now.’

Mrs. Thorne smiled, but she did not oppose her child’s wishes. The face and hands were once more washed, the pretty bright hair was combed into its natural curls, and in a very short time Patty was ready to go in to her father’s room and show herself in her new but simple white frock and blue sash, while her blue eyes sparkled with happiness and the roses bloomed on her cheeks.

John Thorne stifled a sigh as he gazed at his little daughter, but he would not on such an eventful day utter or even look the sad thoughts that rose to his mind. In a pleasant tone he said,—

‘My little girl does look clean and neat, and the frock is very pretty. How kind of mother to make it for you! And now, my child, go and sit down and rest for a few minutes, or you will be tired out before you start.’

‘May I just go to the gate and see if Fred is coming?’ she asked.

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'Yes,' replied her mother, 'if you will first sit quietly for ten minutes, as your father says, and then it will be time to put on your hat and cape, and I dare say Fred will be here.'

Patty seated herself demurely, and although to her the ten minutes seemed an hour, yet they quickly passed, and in five more minutes Patty had completed her toilet by tying on a straw hat, trimmed with blue to match the cape and the sash.

The next moment she ran out to the gate to look for her cousin Fred, but before opening it she paused suddenly, as Sir Edward Wentworth and the rector stood before her.

'Well, little Patty,' said the former, 'you're dressed all in readiness, I see. Who is going to take you to the schoolrooms?'

'Cousin Fred, sir,' replied Patty, with a low curtsey. 'I know the way, and I could go by myself to the schools, but mother won't let me now.'

'No, Patty, because there are so many of you, and as your mother cannot leave your father, she is very anxious to feel sure you are safe with the rest.'

'But you are too early, my child,' said the rector. 'How is your father this morning?'

At this moment Mrs. Thorne made her appearance, and answered the rector's question by saying,—

'My husband would like to see you, sir, if you could spare a few minutes. He is much better, I think.'

Without a word the rector advanced. The dying man received him with a smile, and his eyes brightened as he said,—

'I am so glad to see you, rector.'

A few kind but cheering words from the clergyman, and an equally bright response from the invalid, in which he spoke of death as a change too glorious to cause fear, and then a voice asked in subdued tones,—

'May I come in too?'

'O yes, Sir Edward,' replied the invalid; and as the distinguished bearer of that name entered the room, the master and the servant, the bearer of a title and the humble gardener, clasped each other's hands in that holy friendship which knows no class feeling between those who are united to the Saviour by the ties of brotherhood.

Sir Edward and the rector, having with comforting words wished Sarah Thorne good-bye, left the cottage under a depression of feeling natural to human nature after leaving a dying bed; but one glance at the pretty little figure in blue and white changed the whole tenor of their thoughts. Patty stood at the

open garden gate as the two gentlemen approached ; but as she moved aside to let them pass, Sir Edward caught a glimpse of the changed face and the tears glittering on the eyelashes.

‘Why, Patty,’ he exclaimed, ‘what is the matter ? Tears and sad looks on such a happy day as this !’

‘Please, sir, I’m afraid I shall be left behind Fred hasn’t come for me yet, and it’s nearly nine o’clock, I know.’

Sir Edward looked at his watch. ‘Ten minutes. Fred ought to have been here by this time. Never mind, Patty ; dry your eyes and brighten up ; the rector and I will see you safely at the schools in time. Give me your hand.’

Timidly the little girl obeyed, and at this moment Mrs. Thorne came out to look after her.

‘All right, Mrs. Thorne,’ said Sir Edward, looking back over his shoulder. ‘Master Fred has forgotten his promise, I fear, so we are going to take his place.’

‘Thank you, Sir Edward,’ exclaimed Sarah, and then hastened back to her husband’s room to tell him that Sir Edward and the rector had got his little girl between them, each holding her hand, and that she looked bright and happy, but almost out of her wits with surprise at her position.

For some distance Patty could only reply, ‘Yes,

sir,' or 'No, sir,' to the questions of her companions ; and she had only just recovered sufficiently to speak of her cousins, and answer the rector's inquiries about their names and ages, when a turn in the lane brought Cousin Fred in sight, coming along at a tremendous pace. Patty, forgetting her shyness and the honour of her position, exclaimed, 'O, here comes Fred !' but she resisted the first impulse, which was to draw away her hands and run to meet him.

But Fred, at the sight of Patty's escort, suddenly pulled himself up, and stood still ; while the gentlemen held the child's hands too firmly for her to escape, as they walked on towards Fred.

'Come along, my boy,' said Sir Edward ; 'you would not come for your cousin, so we are bringing her to you. What makes you so late ?' he continued as they came near to the boy, who was moving slowly towards them.

But Fred did not reply till the gentlemen and Patty came up to him, and then he said, 'Please, Sir Edward, I'm very sorry ; but it's not my fault. The tailor never brought home my new jacket till about five minutes ago ; and I've run so fast to get to Patty that I was too out of breath to answer you.'

'It was too bad of the tailor,' said the baronet,

laughing. 'However, we will not detain you, now your cousin has arrived, Patty.'

And then the little well-trained child, as the gentlemen released her hands, curtseyed low, and said to Sir Edward, 'Thank you, sir, for bringing me all this way.'

'Good-bye, little maid,' was the reply. 'Now don't delay ; if Fred has recovered his breath, you and he can run this distance to the schools in five minutes, can you not ?'

'O yes, sir ;' and then the two children started off at a rapid rate, and were soon out of sight.

The school bell had been ringing some minutes when Patty and her cousin entered, and already the boys and girls were being marshalled, two and two, for the walk to Southend pier, with flags and banners. The cheering and waving of handkerchiefs, as the children were admitted at the pier gates, and counted one by one, need not be described here. Sunday scholars who are accustomed to these school treats know their delights too well. But at Southend the pleasures are doubled ; for on the wonderful wooden pier there exists a tramway, on which, drawn by horses, are small carriages which run the whole length of the mile and a quarter to the end of the pier, as the water is not deep enough to float a large

steam-vessel even at half tide, until that point is reached. At the time of which we write these conveyances were very different to the railway carriages now in use, being originally intended merely as trucks to convey the luggage of passengers to and from the steamers at the end of the pier. But as the traffic increased, these trucks were provided with seats. These homely conveyances were, on the occasion we describe, quickly filled with delighted children ; and as truck after truck discharged its living freight at the pier head, the cheering and excitement could with difficulty be subdued by the teachers and others in charge. By firm and judicious arrangement, however, the children were safely led down the gangway to the deck. Perhaps also a consciousness of danger arose, as they felt the movement of the steamer on the rising tide. With few exceptions both boys and girls were quiet and subdued, while they performed the, to them, dangerous descent.

It was not, however, till the large steamer had freed herself from the ropes and hawsers of the pier that the young passengers felt safe, for the rolling and pitching of the vessel meanwhile was rather alarming to them. At last, when the steamboat had paddled out into deep and smooth water, with the sun's heat subdued by fleecy clouds and a summer

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breeze, a cheer rose in the air from many youthful voices, and was replied to from the pier and numerous rowing-boats, with waving of caps and handkerchiefs.

We will leave the happy children to enjoy their trip, and return to John Thorne's cottage.





CHAPTER III.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED ?

SIR EDWARD WENTWORTH, after seeing the children safely on board for this long-looked-for school treat, returned to the town, and made his way quickly to the railway station. Before parting with the rector, Dr. Milwood, on the pier, Sir Edward had said to him,—

‘I am very sorry not to be able to accompany you, rector. I have most important business in town to-day ; but I hope to return in time to meet you on the pier before the steamer is alongside.’

The approach of evening brought the friends of the children to the entrance gates of the pier, but they were not allowed to enter. Several of the townspeople had also assembled, forming a rather unusual crowd. Telescopes were used by those who possessed

them, to obtain the first glimpse of the returning steamboat ; and some little excitement prevailed on hearing at last the words : 'Here she comes, all right ! She'll soon be alongside.'

Meanwhile Sir Edward had passed through the entrance gates, and was being drawn along the pier in one of the trucks, with two friends whom he had brought with him from London.

'What a fine day the children have had !' said he ; 'but I fear it will not last. There is a ripple on the water that looks rather ominous ; no doubt a change occurred when the tide turned.'

'I think this is only a summer evening breeze,' said one of his friends ; 'and here comes a steamer. Is it the one you are expecting ?'

'Yes,' replied Sir Edward ; 'and I am glad we are here first,' as the homely vehicle stopped to enable the gentlemen to alight.

The summer sun still shone brightly, although the church clock had struck eight, as the vessel steamed in sight ; but her movements were not very gentle, owing to the ripple which Sir Edward had noticed. The young folks on board, however, had become more accustomed to the sensations which so alarmed them in the morning ; and, having less consciousness of danger, were perhaps too carelessly confident of

safety. The breeze which rippled the surface of the water seemed to freshen as the steamer approached the pier, and then began the pitching and rolling, but with much greater force than in the morning. The sailors on the pier stood ready with ropes and hawsers to haul the vessel in, while from the call-boy sounded the words signalled by the captain: 'Ease her!' 'Stop her!' 'Turn her astern!' 'Go on ahead!'—orders which the freshening breeze made it somewhat difficult to obey.

Not a few of the children showed symptoms of fear, as they were rolled and tossed from side to side, while the steamer was being brought alongside. This was effected at last, and then the gangway, protected on both sides by sailcloth, was made fast to the deck of the steamer, and to the lower deck of the pier.

'I'm sure I don't know how we're to get up there,' said Fred Forest, who stood with his sisters and cousin where they had been placed on the deck of the steamer and told not to move. 'See how low down we are. Shall we have to wait for high tide?'

'No, Fred,' exclaimed Patty; 'look, there's a lot of boys and girls going through that dreadful black place; it must be all safe, Fred, or they wouldn't tell them to go.'

'Well, no, of course not; but how can we get on the pier? That floors me.'

'Don't move till I come for you,' said a young teacher, addressing Fred and his party. 'Fanny Forest looks dreadfully alarmed; but there's no danger,' he whispered, drawing Ellen Forest aside. 'Hold her hand tightly, Ellen, and we'll wait till the deck is clearer.'

Patty and her cousins had been separated from their class by the strict orders they had received not to move; and with some little anxiety they watched their companions, as they passed along the gangway and disappeared into what seemed to them utter darkness. And truly it was an ordeal for children to mount those stairs, and pass under the black wooden rafters which crossed and recrossed each other in every direction, while the foaming water was seen through the front of each step, and, disturbed by the motion of the steamer, sprinkled them with the spray, making them cling more closely to their friends and teachers, as they proceeded upward. No wonder little Fanny Forest, a nervous, timid child, stood trembling and pale by her sisters and brother, holding their hands tightly, and looking in awe and dread at the entrance to that dreadful place.

Twice had the trucks, loaded with their living

freights, conveyed the majority of the young people to Southend in safety, and the number still remaining was less than fifty. As the empty vehicles were heard approaching, a search was made in every direction to ascertain if any of the children were missing. Presently from the deck of the steamer was heard a succession of screams, which caused much alarm and excitement. Then came the words :

‘I won’t go that way—I won’t! It’s all dark; I shall be drowned! O, look! the water is dashing in!’ cried the terrified child, while young Mr. Carleton, Fred’s teacher, and Miss Warden, who taught Ellen Forest’s class, tried their utmost to calm the child’s fears, but without success.

‘Send the girls and Fred on shore,’ said Mr. Carleton to Miss Warden; ‘then I’ll carry the poor little frightened child to the pier. Perhaps she will want to follow them, if she sees them go. We can’t keep the steamer here all night. She will be safe with me,’ he whispered; ‘take the girls and Fred at once. See! they are going to remove the gangway.’

The man paused as he saw them coming, while Mr. Carleton, who was a great favourite of Fanny’s, attracted her attention for a moment, and then suddenly raised her in his arms and carried her towards

the gangway. But the child struggled so violently that before he could reach the ship's side, she escaped from his arms and disappeared. The next moment a sudden lurch of the vessel, as the ropes were loosened, hid the deck from sight. When the vessel righted itself, neither Frank Carleton nor his little charge could be seen.

Meanwhile Fred and his two sisters and Patty, on reaching the pier deck, waited at the head of the stairs, expecting to see Mr. Carleton arrive with Fanny. They stood for some minutes, but no one appeared, and Fred, in his anxiety and alarm, would have rushed down the steps again, had he not been restrained by Miss Warden.

'No doubt Mr. Carleton and Fanny are quite safe,' she said; 'and I dare say the gangway has been removed. Listen!' she continued; 'they are calling out for us all to fill the trucks quickly, as it is getting so late.'

'O, we can't go home without little Fanny, teacher,' exclaimed Ellen, now fairly in tears, while Sarah and her cousin Patty were sobbing bitterly.

'Any more for the trucks?' shouted the driver, and then was heard the voice of Sir Edward:

'Come, come, children, you are detaining the driver;' and, as the speaker advanced nearer, he

exclaimed, 'What is the matter, children? Why in tears? Has anything happened?'

'Please, Sir Edward,' said Patty Thorne, checking her sobs, 'they are saying that Mr. Carleton and Fanny Forest are drowned.'

'Drowned! nonsense, child! O, it must be a mistake! I hope nothing so terrible has occurred. Most likely they are amongst the children in the front truck, or they may have been left behind in the steamer.'

'O no, Sir Edward!' replied Fred Forest; 'we saw Mr. Carleton take Fanny in his arms before we got on deck, and then we heard the man say, "All out," and the steamer went away. Please look, sir; it's a long way off now.'

A sharp, hasty message, and a threat to go on and leave them behind, made the little group start forward and mount the trucks quickly, Sir Edward anxiously remaining to the last with a faint hope that Mr. Carleton and the child would appear. The hope was not verified, and many of the poor children who had so enjoyed this happy day were proceeding homewards with a fear and dread in their hearts that a little schoolfellow and one of their favourite teachers had been drowned.

Sir Edward watched the conveyances as they pro-

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ceeded along the pier towards Southend. He had purposely remained behind, and, after a few moments of thought, he approached the pier-master, to consult him on the best plan to adopt.

'This is a sad ending of a happy day, Thomson,' he said; 'and yet it certainly seems improbable that Carleton and the child should have fallen overboard and been drowned without at least one of the crew of the steamer becoming aware of it.'

'I consider it entirely a false report, Sir Edward,' replied the man. 'Had such a thing happened, it must have been discovered at the time.'

'Well, yes—perhaps so,' replied the baronet in a musing tone. Then suddenly, as a thought seemed to strike him, he exclaimed, 'Thomson, they may have been left behind on board after all. What is the steamer's destination?'

'Sheerness, Sir Edward,' he replied.

'Would a boat do the distance?' asked the baronet.

'Well, yes, Sir Edward. We've no real night at this time of the year, and there will be moonlight as well, and I dare say a couple of rowers would manage the distance in two hours, at all events before midnight, when they're all asleep.'

'Asleep, man!' cried the baronet. 'Do you suppose the families of Fanny Forest and Mr. Carleton

will sleep till they know whether the missing ones are alive and well, or sleeping in death beneath the waves of the ocean ?'

'No, indeed, Sir Edward,' replied the pier-master ; 'and if you really wish for a boat, I can get you one in a very short time.'

'While I wait ?'

'O yes, sir ; the men will have wind and tide in their favour a great part of the distance.'

'I shall go with them,' said the baronet ; 'and, if they ply their oars well, the payment shall be a guinea.'





CHAPTER IV.

A SAD MISTAKE.

WHEN do you expect the young folks home, Sally?' asked John Thorne, as the summer evening sun approached the west.

'O, not before nine. I think the tide does not turn at the earliest till half-past seven, yet I fancy we may expect the first arrivals about eight.'

John glanced at his watch, which hung on the wall near him, and then sighed deeply.

'I wish Patty was at home, Sally dear,' he said; and then added, 'Don't leave me, dear wife; I believe one of the messengers John Bunyan describes will soon come for me.'

Poor Sally suppressed a sigh as she seated herself by the bed, and placed her hand on his in silence. She could not trust herself to speak.

The cottage doors and windows were still open to admit the soft evening breeze, and presently John said,—

‘Read to me, dear—the eighth of Romans. “No condemnation,” Sally, “thanks be to God.” Think of that.’

Tears rose to her eyes as she took the Testament from the table and opened it at the required chapter. It needed, however, some minutes to enable Sarah Thorne to command her voice sufficiently to read, but she succeeded at last in sounding forth the glorious words: ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.’

John closed his eyes and listened, as the reader’s voice, cheered by the holy words, became firm and clear, especially as she neared the glorious ending. But the sound of footsteps and the prattle of children’s voices, as they passed the cottage door, told of *their* return, at least, in safety from the treat, and that the long-looked-for happy day was ended.

More than one of the teachers and children paused at the cottage door to inquire after Mr. Thorne, but Sarah, observing the look of excitement in the eyes of her husband, would not allow them to enter, and after the children had passed on she closed the door.

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'Patty and her cousins are late, Sally; I wish she had returned with the first batch of trucks.'

'Don't be uneasy, John dear. All those teachers and children must have required three journeys on the pier both going and coming home, and no doubt they are all safe, for those who passed just now were happy and merry enough.'

'God in His mercy grant that it is so!' said poor John; 'but, dear wife, I cannot help feeling nervous about my Patty.'

Soothing words from Sarah for a time calmed him, but at last he begged her to give him a dose of the composing draught, saying,—

'It will quiet my nerves and make me sleepy, I know, but I will try not to sleep till Patty comes home. She won't be long now, for I can hear children's voices and footsteps.'

'Take your drops first, John dear,' said the poor wife anxiously.

'No, no,' he replied. 'Here she comes!' as eager voices were heard in the little front garden. 'Open the door, dear Sarah.'

Mrs. Thorne obeyed, but, instead of Patty, several children stood at the door, and hurriedly, and in tones of alarm, all speaking at once, exclaimed,—

'O, Mrs. Thorne, I'm afraid there's been an accident!

There's a little girl lost, and one of the teachers ; and people say they're drowned.'

'Hush, hush !' exclaimed Sarah, coming out on the step and drawing the door close behind her. 'They can't be drowned ; but who are they ?'

'It's one of the boys' teachers, ma'am,' said an elder girl with hesitation.

'What is the little girl's name ?' she asked, with white lips.

'I'm sure it isn't true,' replied the girl, 'but they do say it is your Patty.'

For a few moments Sarah could scarcely resist the faintness that overpowered her, but a thought of her husband made her say calmly,—

'Go away now, all of you ; I shall know the truth when Sir Edward and the rector return.'

Closing the door quickly but gently, Sarah hastened to her husband's room, and almost started back at the sight of his changed face.

'I've heard something those children said when you opened the door. Hasn't a little girl been drowned ? If it is our darling !—O, dear Sarah, what will you do without both of us ?'

'Dear, dear husband !' exclaimed Sarah, falling on her knees by the bed, 'I do really believe our Patty is safe. Those children had heard false reports, no

doubt, and they were frightened. But, dear John, can't you trust our dear Patty to God?' she continued, losing all control over herself, while the tears burst forth. 'I cannot believe that God would take away my husband and my child from me both at once!' And then for a few moments the stricken wife, so soon to be a widow, buried her face in the bedclothes and sobbed bitterly.

Poor Sarah's outburst calmed the dying man. He placed his pale, thin hand on his wife's bowed head, and from his trembling lips came the words,—

'“Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.”'

'O, John,' said his wife, rising from her knees and restraining herself with an effort, 'if I only had your faith!' adding, after a glance at the table, 'O, and there is your medicine! you have not taken it yet.'

'Give it me now, dear Sarah; perhaps it will take away some of these strange feelings I have had all day. But, O, if I could only be sure that my little Patty was safe, and that I should see her once more, I should die happy.'

After taking the composing drops, Sarah noticed that John lost the expression of excitement on his face and seemed inclined to sleep. She sat watching him in silent dread; for her husband had changed

greatly during the last twelve hours. She knew by his appearance that the end was near, and, worse still, that it had been in some measure hastened by the news brought to the cottage.

‘I must submit to God’s will, and be patient,’ she said to herself, ‘but I do earnestly pray that poor John’s last moments may be comforted by the return of my darling child in health and safety.’

The clock struck nine. John still dozed calmly, Sarah watching in fear and dread that he would pass away in his sleep without again seeing the child he so dearly loved.

Presently the sounds of young voices and rapid steps were heard approaching the garden gate. Warned by the closed door, Patty thoughtfully hushed the voices of her companions, and whispered, ‘I’ll go in first; you all stay here.’ But the mother had recognised the whisper of her child, and, opening the door, raised the little girl in her arms, kissed her fondly, and exclaimed, ‘Thank God, my darling is safe! Now come to your dear father; he has been longing for you.’

The altered face which Patty saw as she entered the room was a terrible shock to her, and for a moment she stood still on the threshold. But a smile that spread over it, as the dying father feebly

opened his arms to his little daughter, bore the impress of a love that was stronger than death. Throwing off her hat, she climbed on the bed, and as with a last effort he pressed his darling to his heart, he faintly murmured, 'Thank God, my darling child is safe!—I have lived to say good-bye to her. The messenger has come for me.'

A slight convulsive movement, and Sarah lifted Patty to the ground; and, as the child stood clinging to her mother, John opened his eyes and said, 'Good-bye, dear wife;' and then, as, pale and trembling, she drew nearer to him, the dying man seemed scarcely conscious of the farewell kisses she pressed on the cold, wan lips.

Once more he opened his eyes, and with an effort to smile he said faintly, 'Lift me up, dear love.' Sarah raised the pillow on which his head rested, and then, as his breathing gradually grew fainter, John Thorne passed peacefully away from earth.





CHAPTER V.

THE MIDNIGHT BOAT RACE.

THE steamboat, relieved of its living freight, had all this while been making way at a rapid rate, and could scarcely be distinguished in the distance by Sir Edward, when pointed out to him by the rowers.

‘Is there any hope of overtaking it?’ asked the baronet, when at last he discerned the white steam, visible even yet in the summer twilight, floating behind a dark body which seemed a speck on the horizon.

‘No, sir, it ain’t possible wi’ this ’ere boat; she’ll be many a knot away by this time.’

‘Will she remain at Sheerness all night?’ asked Sir Edward anxiously.

‘O yes, sir, leastways till four in the morning She’s called the *Fairy*, ain’t she, mate?’ asked the boatman, addressing his companion.

‘Yes, and she’s a fast sailer, she is,’ was the reply. ‘You’ll have to land at Sheerness pier, master, and there’ll be time to have a look at her.’

While talking thus, the men were plying their sculls with a will through the water, now nearly at high tide. The breeze had sunk, and as the tide turned the men cut through the water at a rapid rate, and again became silent.

Sir Edward drew his railway rug closer, and, leaning back in the comfortably arranged stern of the boat, closed his eyes, and began to reflect that perhaps after all he was running a wild goose chase, and that Frank Carleton and little Fanny were safe at home in bed.

‘I do hope they will not be alarmed at home at my absence. I ought to have telegraphed, but there seemed no time. However I will pray and trust that the missing ones may be found on board, when we arrive at Sheerness.’

Another hour, and sunlight, with a golden-tinted sky and fleecy clouds, was reflected on the calm surface of the water in crimson and gold. Sir Edward, whose anxiety kept him awake, roused himself as he heard one of the boatmen cry,—

‘There’s Sheerness Dockyard, master. We’ll be close to the pier now very soon. Ay! and there’s the

Fairy lying close alongside. We shall have to knock 'em all up.'

'Will there not be a watch on board?'

'Well, I'm not sure, master; but there'll be one on 'em on the pier. But we'll try the *Fairy* first.'

A few minutes of rapid rowing, and the boatmen pulled in alongside of the hull of the steamer, which lay high above the water; and one of them, resting his oars, exclaimed 'Ship ahoy!' in a stentorian voice.

The profession of a seafaring man is one calculated to render him not only watchful, but wakeful. Scarcely a moment elapsed before the familiar cry was replied to, and one of the crew presented himself at the taffrail, and, looking over, cried, 'Who are you? what do you want?'

'Tell him, Sir Edward Wentworth is here.'

'Sir Edward? O, I know what he's come for,' was the reply on hearing the baronet's name. 'Will Sir Edward please come on deck?'

'Yes, certainly,' cried the baronet, rising to his feet in the rocking boat.

'She's high out of the water, but I think you can climb a ship's side, Sir Edward,' exclaimed a familiar voice, as that gentleman sprang upon deck through the lifted taffrail.

'Frank, my boy! safe and sound!' cried Sir

Edward. 'Then little Fanny Forest is here, I am sure, or you would not look so happy. Is she all right?' he asked anxiously.

'O yes, quite right now; but she might have lost her life when she left Southend. She is sleeping peacefully in her berth at present, and we need not disturb her yet.'

'Good morning, Sir Edward,' said a hearty voice, as the captain of the *Fairy* presented himself. 'I cannot tell you how anxious I have been since I discovered that Frank Carleton and the child were on board. I knew there would be such terrible alarm at home; but to send them to you by boat or otherwise was out of the question. I cannot thank you enough, Sir Edward, for what you have done in the matter.'

'It was only an act of humanity and sympathy with our fellow creatures, captain,' replied the baronet. 'What a dreadful night of agony this must have been, and still is, to the relatives of Frank Carleton and little Fanny! I feel as if I must return at once to Southend, to tell them the good news.'

'No, Sir Edward, pray don't think of such a thing. Let us give the boatmen who brought you something to eat and drink on board, and then send them back quickly to spread the good news at Southend.'



‘Is the telegraph office open yet?’ asked Sir Edward; ‘because, if so, I can telegraph to Lady Wentworth, and from Leigh Court the news will soon spread.’

‘It shall be done,’ replied the captain; ‘and if the boatmen return at once after a good breakfast, we shall be sure that the report will, from one or both sources, be very quickly spread. And now, Sir Edward, if you do not object to breakfast at five o’clock on board with me and our unexpected visitors, I have no doubt the steward will be able to provide a tempting repast, which you really need after your journey to London, and a night on the sea in an open boat.’

After refreshing himself by the application of water and towels and brushes, Sir Edward enjoyed the breakfast laid for himself, the captain, and Frank Carleton, in one of the saloons. During the meal very slight reference was made to the object of the baronet’s visit; but he ascertained that the captain of the *Fairy* was about to sail from Sheerness at eight o’clock, and to proceed to Broadstairs; therefore it would not be possible for the visitors to the *Fairy* to return home in that steamboat.

‘It would be useless to take Fanny Forest back again to Southend pier,’ remarked Frank Carleton

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when the subject was discussed ; ' we should have the same trouble all over again with her.'

' No doubt,' replied Sir Edward ; ' yet I am so anxious to get home ; the telegram I sent may be delayed, and a thousand things may happen to interfere with its early arrival.'

' We must resign our charge of the little passenger before we start this morning,' said the captain, ' and—Here she comes,' he added, as little Fanny, looking pale, but very happy, was led into the saloon by the stewardess.

' And so, little one, you like being on board a steam-boat,' said Sir Edward, seating himself, and drawing the child between his knees, ' better than being at home, eh ?'

' It wasn't my fault, sir,' said Fanny ; ' I wanted to go home, but I couldn't go through that dreadful black place and up those steps with the water showing.'

' But all the other children went through safely, Fanny.'

' Yes, sir, I know, but they were not so frightened as I was ; they couldn't be, or they wouldn't have gone through.'

' A little bit of logic—eh, Fanny ? Well, now, you are going home with Mr. Carleton and me in a sailing boat. Shall you be afraid in a boat ?'

‘O no, sir, I should like it very much.’

‘But now, Fanny, I want to ask you how you got that bruise on your forehead?’

‘I fell down-stairs, sir,’ she replied; but her eyelids drooped at the question.

‘How came you to fall down-stairs, Fanny?’

The child remained for a few moments silent, and then, proving that with all her nervousness she possessed moral courage, she exclaimed boldly,—

‘Please, sir, it was my own fault. I couldn’t go through the black stairs, and teacher took me up to carry me through; and I screamed and struggled so that he couldn’t hold me; and when I got away, I ran down the little stairs so fast that I fell right down to the bottom and knocked my head just here.’

‘Foolish child!’ said Sir Edward, laughing; ‘you should have gone down backwards. No wonder you tumbled and hurt yourself.’

‘The boat will be here very soon now, Sir Edward,’ said the captain, approaching. ‘Go and ask the stewardess to get you ready to go home, my child,’ he added, addressing Fanny; ‘your mother will be very glad to see you, I’ll be bound.’

Fanny Forest was not a shy child; she quickly obeyed, and in a very few minutes the stewardess

made her appearance, leading her by the hand. During her absence the mate of the steamer had made Sir Edward and the captain acquainted with the circumstances which led the crew to suppose that all the young passengers were on shore.

‘I saw Mr. Carleton carrying the child towards the gangway where I stood,’ he said, ‘and the boat gave a lurch, which nearly unshipped it. After I had righted the gangway, I looked about for the young gent and the child, but they were not in sight, and I didn’t hear no more noise and screaming, so I made sure they’d got safe on the pier; and then I shouted, “All ashore!” and the call-boy cried out, “Go on a-head!”’

‘And where were these two passengers hiding?’

‘Down below, Sir Edward—not a-hiding; but the steward did scare me above a bit when he came up the companion ladder, looking so white in the face, and he says, “They’ve been and killed that frightened youngster, I do believe. Come and look at her, mate; I think she’s dead.” And I felt a’most afraid to go into the saloon, but at last I went, and there she lay on your wife’s lap, with young Mr. Carleton bathing her head. And wasn’t I glad when I see her open her eyes, and heard her ask for water? “I’ll put a tea-spoonful o’ brandy in it,” said the steward; and while he were gone, I looked at young

Mr. Carleton, and I said, "Lor, sir, you looks white too ! are you hurted ?"

'No,' Frank had replied, smiling faintly ; 'only almost frightened out of my senses. But I shall soon get better now the child is recovering. Do you feel better, Fanny ?' he had asked.

'Yes, only my head aches, and that strong water you gave me makes me feel sleepy. May I lie down on this nice soft cushion ?' she added, pointing to the crimson velvet seats of the saloon.

'Yes, dear, you may ; come, let me help you, and I'll fetch a pillow for your head, and a little quilt to be laid over you.'

Scarcely three minutes passed before the child was asleep, the swelling on her forehead was subsiding, and young Mr. Carleton expressed a wish to see the captain and describe what had happened.

'We can't spare time to return to Southend,' said the captain, addressing Frank. 'You and the child must go on with us to Sheerness, and from thence we can telegraph to your friends. But were you hurt also when the child fell ? You look pale, Mr. Carleton.'

'Do I, captain ?' he said. 'Well, I had a very narrow escape from a dangerous fall down those perpendicular elevations you designate "steps." In my haste to overtake the child, I forgot that the descent could only be

made safely by going down backwards; and the impetus caused by my rapid movements would have thrown me forward headlong, but for a violent effort which strained the muscles of my shoulders so painfully that I know I shall feel it for days to come.'

'Well, now, rest,' said the captain, after listening to the circumstances which had made the young man and the child prisoners on board; 'and when we lie to at Sheerness there'll be a nice supper ready for you.'

And now Frank and his little charge were being received on board the sailing boat chartered by Sir Edward to take himself and the two young people home to those who, after a night of distressing anxiety, had been prepared by telegrams to receive them safe and sound.

Fanny was full of spirits, but a little nervous, as she looked up to the deck so high above them, and felt the movement of the boat, as Sir Edward and Frank Carleton followed and took their seats. A cheer rose from the deck, on which stood the captain and the crew, who waved their caps and wished them a safe voyage with real earnestness. Sir Edward especially received an ovation; for not one in the vessel had been forgotten by the benevolent

and truly generous baronet on that day. At last they were off; gently the pretty but substantial pleasure-boat cut through the calm and sparkling water, while a slight breeze filled her sails, and landed the voyagers at last on the beach at Southend. A small crowd assembled to greet them; and, as Fanny's mother caught her to her breast, Frank Carleton was surrounded by a group of relatives and friends, who received him as if from the dead.





CHAPTER VI.

SIR EDWARD HEARS SAD NEWS.

ON arriving at Southend on the morning which brought home the lost ones in safety, Sir Edward's gladness was chilled almost to pain by hearing from the rector a confirmation of the report of John Thorne's death.

'I am tired, as you may suppose, doctor,' remarked Sir Edward; 'but not too tired to hear the truth.'

'And here comes the carriage with my lady. You will hear the whole history from her ladyship,' said Dr. Milwood.'

In a few moments they were bowling away on the delicate springs of Lady Wentworth's carriage, and asking questions or listening to the lady's account of what had occurred.

'The nervous excitement of that delicate child,' said Lady Wentworth, 'has been the cause of much

sorrow and anxiety to so many persons. Fanny Forest ought not to have gone at all. Did she make such a fuss in the morning ?'

'No,' was the rector's reply ; 'the tide being high, the steamer was able to come alongside at a level with the highest deck of the pier ; and therefore she had none of those black rafters or open steps to encounter.'

'Ah, well,' replied Lady Wentworth, 'the poor child had nothing to do with the false report that killed John Thorne. Well, no,' she continued, correcting herself, 'I ought not to say that ; the poor fellow has been dying for weeks, and it needed a very little amount of excitement to put an end to that fragile life.'

'What was said or done to hasten John's death, rector ?' asked Sir Edward.

'Well,' he replied, 'I am inclined to think that the excitement, and no doubt anxiety, consequent on the fact that he was allowing his child to go, without either parent, on what, to him, seemed an excursion full of danger, was the principal cause.'

'But in reality there was no danger, especially as every ten or twelve children were in the charge of two grown-up people.'

'All true, no doubt,' replied the rector ; 'but I

know Patty's absence did affect her father in his weak state; for he owned to me that it was so, when I spoke to him for the last time on the morning of the school treat.'

'Poor John! he would have got over that, I feel sure,' said Lady Wentworth, 'had not the frightened children got hold of a report that Frank and one of the little ones were drowned; and they called on their way home at John's cottage, to tell him the dreadful news, with the thoughtless eagerness of youth.'

'Did John know of the report, rector?'

'Yes; poor Sarah, hearing the voices, ran to open the front door, expecting to see little Patty; and their first eager words, uttered loudly, were heard by the dying man: "O, Mrs. Thorne, there's one of the teachers and a little girl drowned!"'

'And the father thought it was his child, poor fellow! I wonder the shock did not kill him at once. But Patty is safe: did he live to see her again and wish her farewell?'

'Yes, thank God, for Sarah's sake. I arrived at the cottage only a few minutes after she had closed her husband's eyes; and the poor child Patty was sobbing bitterly in her mother's arms. I sent some of the women folks from the Court to help her, and then returned to the pier, to inquire if there had

been any news respecting Frank and the child ; and I heard then from the pier-master of your improvised midnight boat race. O, Sir Edward, it was indeed a capital thought of yours ; but I feared it would prove unsuccessful.'

'The telegrams set that fear at rest,' said Lady Wentworth ; 'yet I don't think I ever felt more afraid to open a telegram, than I did when that one was placed in my hands this morning. Sir Edward had alarmed us by his absence ; and you may suppose how comforting the news contained in the telegram must have been to us all, especially to the mother of Frank Carleton, and Fanny's relatives. They say that Ellen Forest was almost like an insane woman about the loss of her child, and declared she would drown herself if they would not admit her on the pier.'

'How strange it is,' remarked the rector, 'that the lower class are, as a rule, so undisciplined ! The power of self-control is never taught to the children, because in most cases the parents do not practise it themselves.'

'Poor Sarah must possess great self-control,' said Lady Wentworth ; 'for, when the children besieged her cottage tumultuously, to tell her the supposed catastrophe, she went outside on the step, closed the

door, and asked, "What is the name of the little girl who is drowned?" "We don't know, ma'am," was the reply; "but she was with the Forests, and I think her name is Patty." Sarah told me she nearly fainted as she heard this, but she conquered herself for her poor husband's sake, and tried to subdue his fears that something had happened to her, till the child herself appeared, safe and sound, but very nervous.'

'Poor John! no doubt now that all this excitement hastened his end. But it is better so. To change a bed of pain and sickness for a home of peace, joy, love, and obedience, and where there is no sin! Ah, if we had but faith to realize such happiness, how trifling the sorrows and trials of earth would appear!

"O could we make our doubts remove,
Those gloomy doubts that rise,
And see the Canaan that we love
With unobscured eyes!

"Could we but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should fright us from the shore."

At this moment the carriage entered the park, and in driving towards the house passed by beds of roses, lilies, and other beautiful and fragrant flowers, all in a high state of cultivation.

‘How lovely the pleasure-grounds look this morning!’ remarked the rector, after a few minutes’ silence; ‘Leigh Court is a delightful spot.’

‘Ah yes, but it reminds me of the faithful servant who is gone; his industry for so many years has been the foundation of all this beauty and fragrance.’

The carriage was now passing round the drive which encircled the spacious lawn, and presently stopped.

‘Come in and take luncheon with us, rector,’ said Sir Edward; ‘it has been ordered early, for after my exploit last night I require rest, and I want to talk to you about poor Thorne’s funeral. I intend to defray all the expenses, of course in a simple, unassuming form, yet sufficiently good to show my respect for a good and faithful servant.’

‘Thorne is going to be buried to-morrow,’ said Mrs. Forest to a customer, a few days after Sir Edward’s kind interference had brought peace and comfort to so many anxious hearts. ‘Sir Edward’s been very kind in giving us good mourning; for, you know, Thorne was my brother-in-law. I expect there’ll be a lot following.’

‘Who are going to be the bearers?’

‘O, my Tom, and five others of the villagers; but the best part is, they’ll walk to the church, and

there's going to be a procession of ever so many Sunday scholars, boys and girls, and they are to sing hymns as they go along.'

'O, I shall like that, Mrs. Forest,' said the customer. 'I'm sure we ought to feel glad, not sorry, when we think that our dear friends are happy in heaven. Poor John Thorne must have been glad to leave that poor sick body behind, although it's very hard for poor Sarah. She will have to earn her own living now.'

'O, Sarah's all right,' said Mrs. Forest; 'John's laid by a little money, I know, and Sarah's clever, too. When she gets over her trouble, she'll set to work again and soon make a home for herself.'

'Poor Thorne! I shall go and see the last of him,' said the customer, who, as the reader will perceive, was fond of a gossip. 'At what time does the funeral leave the cottage?'

'At ten o'clock,' replied Mrs. Forest. 'I'm his sister-in-law, and I must go, though I can't help feeling very sad when I'm at a funeral, and when the coffins are put into the grave, I always have a good cry.'

The country road which ran in front of John Thorne's cottage presented a touching sight, as, at the appointed day and hour, the people and children of the village were assembled to do honour to one

of their own class. The Sunday scholars were already marshalled to follow by their teachers, headed by the choir in their white surplices, when the cottage door opened, and the bearers appeared, carrying the coffin. A few moments more, and then Sarah, leading her child, followed the coffin as chief mourner, and in front of it walked Sir Edward Wentworth and Dr. Milwood the rector.

As the long procession moved, there rose in the air the sweet strains of the hymn, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.' This was followed by Luther's 'Great God! what do I see and hear?' and then burst forth the beautiful words of Dr. Watts: 'Why do we mourn departing friends?' mingled with the sounds of the tolling bell, as they neared the church.

Then the singing ceased, and, as the bearers entered the porch, the coffin was met by the clergyman, from whose lips sounded forth the glorious words of comfort: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' Perhaps in the whole English language there cannot be found more beautiful, touching, and glorious language than that chosen for the Burial Service. A large congregation filled the church on the occasion we describe, most of

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them children under fifteen, and many a young eye was moistened with tears as the onlookers saw the coffin lowered into the grave, and listened to the beautiful prayers, in which the solemn words occur: 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' words rendered still more impressive by the accompanying sound of earth falling on the coffin below.





CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW LANDLORD.

SIX years ! What a long time it appears to look forward to, and what changes it produces in a child of ten years ! Patty

Thorne was now a tall, stout girl of sixteen, and a great comfort and help to her mother. Mrs. Thorne's health had been failing for some time, but Patty, accustomed to see her daily, did not remark the gradual change in her dearly loved mother's face as visitors did.

'That poor girl will be an orphan in reality, and, I fear, very soon,' said a young housemaid from Leigh Court, who had gone to the cottage to purchase some of Mrs. Thorne's new-laid eggs. 'Sally is looking very bad, and her girl doesn't see it.'

'So much the better,' replied the farmer's wife, as they walked on towards the village ; 'it's best not

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to make the poor child miserable before it's quite necessary. Let her be happy as long as she can; there'll be sorrow enough for her by and by, I reckon.'

'Sarah Thorne has never got over poor Thorne's death,' was the reply; 'and if she dies, it will be hard lines for poor Patty.'

'O, she'll go to her Aunt Forest's, I dare say. Tom's is a good situation, and his wife's shop brings her in a lot of custom; I've heard they're very well off.'

'But they've got six children, you know, and they do dress fine, to be sure, all of 'em. Why, Ellen must be eighteen or nineteen; and Fred, too, he's quite a swell on Sundays. What a great tall fellow he is for seventeen!'

'What's become of that poor, nervous child of hers?' asked Mrs. Stapleton, the farmer's wife. 'I mean the one that screamed with fright and caused everybody so much trouble: and what it must have cost Sir Edward to pay all he did! Only think of Fanny Forest causing such expense, and frightening everybody out of their wits.'

'O, poor little thing, she's to be pitied now,' exclaimed the housemaid. 'I've heard Sir Edward say that he should never regret what he did then.'

Why, poor little Fanny is thirteen now, and she's so delicate. The doctor says it was her weak nerves that made her so terrified that day on the pier. Sir Edward says there shall be no more school treats for the little ones on the water.'

'And quite right, too,' exclaimed Mrs. Stapleton, as they reached the village. And then suddenly she added, 'What are you going to do with those eggs? Why didn't you call for them on your way back? I expect you'll break half of them while you're in the market.'

'O no; all right. I'll take care,' she called out, as Mrs. Stapleton turned away. 'Good-bye.'

The farmer's wife, with her superior age and experience, went on her way thinking, not of the danger likely to happen to the brittle ware which the maiden carried in her basket, but of the young girl so soon to be motherless.

'Sarah is fretting herself to death, I know she is,' reflected the farmer's wife. 'She'll go off just as her husband did; but then she's got such energy, she gets better and then worse, and I expect she'll last for months yet, or even years.'

But a sudden calamity was about to fall on the tenantry of Sir Edward Wentworth not a calamity in Sir Edward's case, for to him sudden death was

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sudden glory. But the messenger came, and the man of sixty, of seemingly vigorous health and noble presence, was mysteriously removed from his loving and sorrowing tenantry. So terrible was the news, not only to Sir Edward's own immediate tenantry, but to the landed gentry of the surrounding country, that it produced amongst those who heard it a feeling at first as if they were stunned. This was soon followed by grief as sincere as the love they bore him. That week which terminated with a funeral was never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it, or who followed Sir Edward Wentworth to the grave; not for the glorious trappings or funeral pomp, but for the multitude who assembled to show their bitter grief at the loss they had sustained. It seemed as if not only the whole tenantry, but the entire neighbouring counties, had determined to do the highest honour to their lost and beloved friend and landlord.

But I need not enter into detail of all that occurred at that sad time, only so far as the story is connected with my principal characters. Among these are Sarah Thorne and her child Patty. How did the lamented death of Sir Edward affect these humble tenants, who had lost their best earthly friend? Alas for poor Sarah! the greatest trial of her life was coming upon her, though not im-

mediately. Sir Edward and Lady Wentworth had no son living to succeed his father. The church bells pealed out joyfully one summer morning, to celebrate the birth of a son and heir, about twenty years before our story commences. But the boy died young, and no other son was born to take his place.

Lady Wentworth and her daughters very soon vacated the estate in favour of the new landlord and baronet, Sir Thomas Wentworth, who took possession of the mansion about three months after the death of his cousin. A very short time sufficed to show that the cousins were as opposite to each other in character and manners as light and darkness.

‘We’ve got a rare Turk for our master this time,’ exclaimed a farm labourer on the estate; ‘he orders us about as if we was slaves. The Turks do have slaves to work for ’em, mate, don’t ’em?’

‘O, I don’t know nought about them Turks nor their slaves, not I; on’y I just think the new maister’s been a slave-driver in his time.’

‘Likely enough,’ replied his mate; ‘but I’m not going for to stay and work hard, and just get spoken to worse than if I was a dog.’

‘Ah,’ said the other, ‘we lost a good man, we did, when Sir Ed’ard died; he wor a good man, he wor.’

This little scrap of talk will show the reader in what estimation the new baronet was held among his labourers and tenants, but his conduct in one case roused the resentment of the whole community. The death of Sir Edward Wentworth brought poor Sarah Thorne's illness to a crisis. She had for months been brooding over the fact that she would soon die; and then what would become of Patty? How far it was from her imagination to suppose that the new landlord would interfere with the cottage and land given to John, may be easily understood. Yet this proved to be the case.

One morning two gentlemen stopped in their walk along the road in front of 'The White Cottage,' as Patty's home was still called. Sarah was at work near her little parlour window, which was half open, to admit the sweet sunshine and balmy air of early spring. Seeing the gentlemen, one of whom she recognised as the new baronet, she drew back out of sight, but could not remove out of hearing of their conversation.

'That is a very picturesque cottage, Wentworth,' was the first remark of the gentleman who accompanied the baronet; and both it and the reply were distinctly heard by poor Sarah.

'Yes, it may be, Leslie, but to me it is a great

nuisance. I just want that piece of ground for another purpose ; and I mean to have it too, in spite of Sir Edward's folly.'

'And what was that folly?'

'Why, a favourite gardener of his lived here for many years, and he not only gave him the cottage as a freehold, but also a large piece of ground at the back.'

'But if it is freehold, Sir Thomas, you cannot touch it, you know.'

'That is to be proved,' replied the baronet. 'The man's widow and child are still living there, though I doubt their right to do so.'

'But are not the deeds in existence? Sir Edward was not a man to give house and land to any one without making it sure in black and white.'

'I've searched high and low for any document or memorandum among Sir Edward's papers,' was the reply, as the two gentlemen moved on, and poor Sarah lost the remainder of the sentence. 'However, I will leave no stone unturned to get that cottage and ground into my hands. I call it a perfect eyesore, and it spoils the view of the river from even our upper windows. You don't suppose I am to endure that, to satisfy the widow and child of a working gardener?'

The reader will have no difficulty in making out the real character of the new owner of Leigh Court, from what poor Sarah heard of that gentleman's conversation. Delicate as her health was, she felt more than once inclined to go to the door, and face her new landlord on the threshold; but conscious weakness kept her back. She could only sit still with her work resting in her lap, and try to remember whether any pen and ink documents respecting the White Cottage were signed by Sir Edward and her husband, at the time when the baronet gave him the property; but in vain.

'I have some idea of Sir Edward having sent for poor John one evening,' she said to herself; 'and when he came home he looked so happy, and clapped his hand on my shoulder and kissed me, and said, "It's all right, Sally dear, this house and ground belong to us now, and it will be yours and our children's after my death." I can remember that day quite well. Patty was about a year old, and we sat talking about Sir Edward's kindness, and having no rent to pay, and such a large piece of ground for flowers and fruit and vegetables, and a place for keeping chickens, which John said he could make himself; but he never said a word about any papers being signed, and the new landlord said just now

that he'd been searching for them. O,'—and a sudden thought arose in Sarah's mind,—'oughtn't John to have had those papers, and not Sir Edward? Yes, I do believe he did have them somewhere. I'll go and have a search at once.'

Poor Sarah! although six years had elapsed since her husband's death, his clothes, his books, and all that belonged to him had been carefully locked away in drawers redolent of camphor; she had never disturbed them, and now it seemed to her a sacrilegious act to do so.

'I must do it for my child's sake,' she reflected. 'I shall not need the cottage home much longer, but it will be real property for my Patty when I am gone.'

Half an hour—an hour passed, while Sarah, at last almost frantically, continued her search, turning over and over again the few papers contained in an old pocket-book, but without discovering any that had the least reference to the White Cottage or its present owners. In despair she closed and locked the drawers, and tried painfully to realize the fact that the cottage she had lived in for more than sixteen years, thinking that it was their own, was in danger of being lost to them, unless some written papers could be found to prove her right to its

possession as the wife of John Thorne. How long she sat in that room reflecting on the past, she never could remember; indeed, it seemed as if she were too stunned to think of any event but the fact that very soon she would be deprived of her home.

She could hear Patty, as she moved about in the little kitchen, busily engaged in preparing their simple dinner for Sunday, and singing in a low tone the hymns she had learned at the Sunday school. These sounds at last roused poor Sarah from her painful reverie. 'Ah,' she exclaimed, 'I must not destroy my child's happiness yet. Patty will know the truth too soon as it is. I need not tell her what I have discovered about the papers. But oughtn't I to ask advice of some one? O, if I had only asked Sir Edward! and now, with this new baronet, I dare not, after what I heard him say. But perhaps the rector'—

'Mother, dinner's ready,' exclaimed a cheerful voice, scattering for a time poor Sarah's fears and anxieties; but as her mother entered the kitchen, or, as the tenants called it, 'the living room,' Patty had the greatest difficulty in repressing an exclamation of alarm at the sight of Sarah's white face.

'Mother,' she said, controlling herself, 'what a long time you've been upstairs! Do you feel worse?'

‘No,’ she replied; ‘but I’ve been looking for a paper among your dear father’s things, and it has upset me.’

Patty Thorne had not lost the intelligence of her childhood; it had grown with her years. She had matured into early womanhood, and in appearance, thoughtfulness, and manner, was far beyond her age. Mother and daughter had changed places. Failing health had in a great degree rendered Sarah Thorne more helplessly dependent upon her womanly daughter, to whose loving care, with God’s blessing, was to be attributed the fact that her mother still lived.

‘Now, mother,’ said Patty cheerfully, ‘you must brighten up and have a little of the chicken I’ve boiled for you, and a piece of bacon too; I’m sure it will do you good.’

With a skilful hand Patty carved the chicken; and when her mother said anxiously, ‘Don’t give me too much, Patty,’ her reply was,—

‘O, there will be plenty for us to-morrow, mother. I’m a great strong girl, and can eat anything, and I am as fond of bacon for dinner as of anything else.’

Some insight into Patty Thorne’s love for her mother, and tender care of her, may be gained even from this trifling incident. ‘Little things determine

character,' is a true and well-known proverb. But the story told after dinner by the mother to her child, as Patty sat listening in concealed dismay, was not a little thing. It needed all a young girl's firmness and self-control to enable her to keep back the tears at the thought of being obliged to leave the pretty home of her birth, and at the same time to speak hopeful and comforting words to her invalid mother. Patty, however, listened attentively to all her mother said. Then she rose, and, laying her arm round her mother's shoulders, she said firmly,—

'Mother, I'm certain father would never have said this cottage and ground were his, if Sir Edward had not given him the proper papers for it; and you may make yourself quite comfortable about the papers; for, if they are not with dear father's things, I am certain Sir Edward was taking care of them for him. But I should like to look over father's things too. May I, mother?'

'Certainly, my child; I know I can trust you to put them all back carefully.'

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Six months have elapsed since the day on which Patty Thorne was told by her sorrowing mother that the deed of gift, by which alone she could claim the house and land given to her husband by Sir Edward Wentworth, was not to be found. Solicitors, employed

by the new baronet, very soon asserted their opinion that John Thorne had illegally taken possession of a certain estate ; that the deed of gift never existed ; or, if it ever had existed, it was not now to be found ; and therefore the property had been used for seventeen years without the payment of rent. Sir Thomas, it was said, could claim the whole amount as arrears of rent due on the estate ; but this, for the sake of the widow and her daughter, he agreed not to claim.

And then came the last, the fatal blow—Patty and her mother were served with a notice of ejectment ! A week was allowed for them to remove their goods and themselves from the White Cottage. But to one of these afflicted cottagers even a week was too long. The legal document was left in the hands of Mrs. Thorne herself by a messenger to whom she had opened the door.

‘What is this for ?’ she asked in a trembling voice.

‘I am very sorry for you, Mrs. Thorne,’ said the man, ‘but you must attend to it ; you’ll have to be out of these premises by to-morrow week. Good morning ;’ and the man, evidently ashamed of what he had to do, disappeared with unusual rapidity.

Sarah stood for a few moments speechless ; then the name ‘Patty ! Patty !’ sounded through the cottage, first in a scream, then more faintly. Patty

rushed to the spot just in time to receive her fainting mother in her arms and carry her to the sofa.

‘Mother ! mother !’ cried the terrified Patty. ‘O, what is it, mother ? why do you look like that ? O, what shall I do ?’ Then, scarcely conscious of her actions, she rushed to the still open door and to the garden gate, crying out, ‘O, who will help me ? O, my poor mother is dying !’ And then, as a man appeared in the distance, she ran forward to meet him, while the words which in her terror she had forgotten rose to her lips, ‘O Lord Jesus, help me !’

‘What has happened, my child ?’ and the voice and uplifted arms arrested the terror-stricken girl.

‘O, doctor, is it you ? O, thank God for hearing me ! Come to poor mother, quick, please,’ she continued, leading the way with rapid steps, and scarcely able to speak for want of breath.

A few moments brought them to the White Cottage. Patty was rushing into the room, but Dr. Andrews held her back. ‘Let me go in first, my child,’ he said, passing her quickly. A few minutes elapsed, and then Dr. Andrews made his appearance. He was about to close the door after him, when Patty exclaimed, in piteous tones,—

‘Where is my mother, doctor ? Mustn’t I go to her ?’

‘Your mother is in heaven, Patty ; all that remains of her is on the sofa in the best room.’

‘Then is my mother really dead ?’ she asked in awe-stricken tones, and trying to control herself. ‘O, may I go in and see her ? I can’t believe it else.’

Without a word, Dr. Andrews opened the door and led her in. She approached the couch, and, kneeling by her dead mother, kissed her pale cheek, and made a secret determination, in the strength of a Higher Power, to do her utmost to clear away the wrong which had been done to her father’s name, and which had probably hastened her mother’s death.





CHAPTER VIII.

PATTY'S NEW HOME.

MAMMA dear, when do you expect Patty Thorne?' asked the youngest of three girls, all in deep mourning. 'She must be so miserable in that cottage all alone.'

'Her Aunt Forest is with her,' replied Lady Wentworth; 'but I shall be glad when the poor child is away from a place so full of sad memories.'

'What keeps her, mamma?' asked Miss Wentworth, raising her eyes from the drawing on the easel before her. 'I am sure I should be glad to get away from a home in which there has been so much sorrow.'

'I do not quite understand what detains her,' replied her mother; 'yet it is very natural for a young girl to cling to the home where she has been born and brought up. Patty is a sensible girl, Laura, and no doubt has reasons for this delay. Besides,

Sir Thomas allowed her three weeks to "clear out," as he called it; so there is no necessity for her to hurry herself.'

It is a pleasant family group to which we have introduced our readers, in a large and tastefully furnished drawing-room. The morning sun of a May day shone brightly at the back of the house over a luxuriant well kept garden and orchard, the latter radiant with the blossoms of spring, and the former filling the air with the fragrance of peonies, lilac, wallflowers, and pink and white May blossom. A branch in full bloom decorated the fireplace, and vases on table and mantelpiece-full of flowers were not wanting.

The house now occupied by Lady Wentworth and her three daughters, Laura, Ethel, and Kate, aged respectively thirteen, seventeen, and nineteen, belonged to the widow of Sir Edward Wentworth; and here the almost broken-hearted lady determined to take up her abode after her husband's death. The house, with its picturesque gabled front and dormer windows, was situated in Berkshire, on a rising ground not far distant from Windsor Castle. It had been left to Lady Wentworth by her father; and, although far inferior to Leigh Court in appearance and extent, it was a veritable country seat, having a staff of servants, carriages and horses, and

other appliances calculated to render it an attractive home.

Laura Wentworth still studied the higher branches of literature and science, as well as painting, music, and languages, with the masters who attended her sisters daily; and although Kate still required a governess to assist her in her studies, Ethel and Laura had, as they boasted, given up the schoolroom. At the same time, the accomplished lady, who for years had superintended the education of Sir Edward's daughters, was to the whole family a loved and cherished friend. More especially since the sudden blow that had deprived Lady Wentworth of her husband, Miss Leslie was in very deed one of the family.

Lady Wentworth possessed a certain amount of pride, and a rather censorious temper. She was one of those keen, clever women who are very severe on women whom they think to be mentally inferior to themselves. Something of this tendency the reader has discovered by the remarks of Lady Wentworth respecting poor little frightened Fanny Forest, and the almost insane excitement displayed by the child's mother when refused admission to the pier on the school treat day to look for her child. The loss of a tender and loving husband had greatly softened this tendency. Conscience reminded her how often

she had sinned against him on this very point, and, alas! spoken to him in tones of scorn and contempt, when, in his anxiety to do good to those around him, he had made some unfortunate mistake. Tears would flow as she recalled all this with an anguish only known to those who forget that a day of reckoning may come, when it is too late to recall the past. Now, therefore, when her eldest daughter wondered at the continued absence of Patty Thorne, who had been engaged to fill the situation of lady's maid to Laura, Lady Wentworth had softened matters by accounting for the delay, and giving simple and natural reasons for it.

What was keeping Patty Thorne away from the excellent situation to which she had been appointed? We will visit the White Cottage and find out the cause.

The bright sunshine of this wonderful May day was subdued in the cottage partially by the blinds drawn down each window. Mrs. Forest stood outside in the little garden, watching her husband and her son Fred, now a stout youth of nineteen, as they carefully packed the cherished furniture in Tom Forest's cart; but Patty was nowhere to be seen.

'Patty,' exclaimed her uncle presently, as he entered the cottage, 'where are you?'

'Upstairs, uncle,' she replied, 'looking for something. I won't be long.'

'But we want the rest of the things from your room, Patty,' he replied, 'and I can't spare much more time to help you to-day. What a lot of furniture you've got!' he added, as Patty, after locking her door, presented herself at the garden gate.

'Yes,' she said, 'it is a lot; there's quite a cartful already. You go on home with this load, and I'll be there in time for dinner, never fear, uncle. Is the room empty and ready for the rest of the things?'

'Yes, quite ready,' replied Fred Forest. 'And now just put on your bonnet and come with us, Patty.'

'No,' she said; 'I'm not ready yet, and your dinner won't be ready for half an hour. Go now with uncle, dear Fred; he'll be vexed if you leave him all the work to do.'

'Well, it is a jolly shame, that's all I can say,' he replied, starting off hastily after his father and the horse and cart, with a look of anger on his face; adding to himself, 'Whatever is that girl up to, I wonder? She's been locking herself in her room, and staying there no end of time.' However, the thought

was dismissed by the prospect of a good dinner, and Fred Forest quickened his steps and forgot all about Patty and her mysteries.

But long ere this Patty had closed the cottage door, and was again locked in her bedroom, which then contained very little more than a chair, a table, and the bed. But that little was in Patty's eyes more valuable to her than all the goods in existence. On that deal table stood an old-fashioned rosewood writing-desk belonging to her father, but seldom used by him. Patty had forgotten all about it till the packing really commenced, and then, while alone in the room once occupied by her parents, she came upon a box under the bed. It was unlocked and seemed empty, excepting that, when moved, something heavy inside was heard to slide about.

'Whatever is it? What can it be?' she asked herself, as she lifted the lid, which was unlocked, and looked in. 'Dear father's desk!' she exclaimed, as a memory of the missing papers flashed across her mind, and, hastily lifting out the desk, she placed it on the deal table, while her face flushed and her hands trembled with excitement. 'Where is the key?' she asked herself breathlessly, as she dragged the open box to the light. 'The desk must be locked, for I've tried to open it and I can't.'

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At this moment something rattled in the box as she moved it, and, stooping eagerly to discover the cause, she espied the key in a distant corner, and, seizing it with a beating heart and half in fear that it was not the right key after all, she placed it in the lock, turned it gently, and lifted the lid. To her great surprise and joy a large number of letters and papers presented themselves to her eyes, and she was about to commence a strict examination of the contents when the voice of her cousin Fred was heard calling,—

‘Patty, Patty, where are you? Father’s come with the cart, and you must make haste. He can only spare an hour to help you.’

Not receiving a reply, Fred mounted the old-fashioned stairs to Patty’s bedroom in the roof, and, turning the handle of the door, to his surprise found it locked.

‘Why, locked in, Patty!’ exclaimed the young man, laughing. ‘Open the door and let’s see what you’ve been about.’

‘Nonsense, Fred!’ said Patty; ‘I may lock myself in my own room, I suppose, without asking your permission.’ But after hastily relocking and hiding the discovered desk, she presented herself at the open door.

Fred Forest, rather surprised at the look of anger in Patty's face, turned away and descended the awkward stairs without a word, while his father at once called him to assist in carrying the furniture to his cart, which boasted of a horse so handsome and strong that people used to say it was 'a pleasure to sit behind Tom Forest's Jack, and no mistake.'

Patty was too much agitated, when she unlocked her door, to follow her cousin downstairs, but, after a few moments of quiet reflection, she recovered herself, and hastened to assist her uncle and cousin with her usual cleverness and activity. After a plain and homely dinner at her uncle's, nothing could induce Patty to spend the evening and sleep at their house. 'I will to-morrow night,' she said; 'but I don't mind sleeping on the floor a bit. There'll be nothing to take away to-morrow but the things I sleep on, and my clothes and books, and I've found boxes enough for them all.' And so it was settled. Fred and his father left Patty in the cottage, and returned home to their tea, wondering greatly at her wish to be alone.

'It's all along of those papers, I do believe,' said her aunt; 'but she ought to be sure by this time that there never was no papers. I know she's searched and searched for them in every nook and

corner of the cottage, and she's found nothing yet ; so what's the use of her worrying herself about it ?'

'But Sir Edward told Sally he had given John the cottage and the ground,' remarked her husband.

'Ah, yes, so he did, and I'm sure he meant them to have it for their own ; but, poor dear gentleman, I dare say he put off signing those papers, never thinking he should die so soon, and so now Patty is turned out because the new landlord wants the ground.'

'T would have been a little fortune to Patty,' was the remark of Tom Forest, 'if the place had really been hers. Why, them flower-beds and fruit-trees must be worth a lot o' money, and all those cucumber frames and the chicken-houses. Who bought the fowls, Nelly?' he continued, after a slight pause.

'Farmer Stapleton's wife,' she replied, 'and a tidy lot of money she gave Patty for them. The gentry and rich folks don't feel half so much for those that are in trouble as poor folks do.'

'Sir Edward did, though,' said Tom Forest, as he rose from the tea-table and took out his pipe to have a smoke in the garden.

'Yes, that's true, Tom,' replied his wife, raising her voice ; 'but there ain't one in a thousand like Sir Edward.'

Meanwhile Patty, too excited even to think of tea, exclaimed, 'Alone at last!' as she closed the front and back doors and drew the bolts.

'How hot the house feels!' she said, ascending the crooked stairs, which were as steep as the companion ladders on board ship, and could only be mounted by the aid of a strong rope suspended from the ceiling. But the young healthy girl found this steep ascent no difficulty. Yet once she paused and said to herself, 'The windows are all open, and it's so hot I can't bear to shut them. Besides, nobody would think of getting in at a window if they wanted *me*,' she added, smiling, as she entered her room, and, in spite of her last remark, locked herself in.

A very few moments, and then on the lid of the box which had concealed it stood the old-fashioned desk. The room contained neither chair nor table; indeed, but for the bedding on the floor and the boxes, it would have been quite empty.

Patty, almost breathless with excitement, knelt by the box, and, gathering up the letters, seated herself on the floor, and placed them in her lap. Poor John, a man of neat and careful habits, had tied the packets in yearly parcels, and dated the outer one. 'Eighteen hundred and sixty,' said Patty to herself; 'why, that's the year when father and mother were

married ! O, and here's the paper about the marriage, and they call mother a "spinster." I wonder what that means, but I don't want that now. I remember dear mother told me that I was a baby a year old when Sir Edward gave father the cottage. O yes, and here is the packet marked 1862. I mean to look at all these.'

Hastily untying the string, Patty took the papers one by one and read them carefully. There were only six papers to examine, but among those dated 1862 not a single reference did she find to the missing documents. Six or seven years' packets were then eagerly examined by the excited girl ; some of them referring to the deaths of her baby brother and sisters, but not one containing even a mention of Sir Edward's gift to his valued servant. Poor child ! when she lifted the last parcel and untied it, her heart gave a throb of pain ; it contained the certificate of her dear father's death.

'There is nothing, nothing at all about the cottage,' she exclaimed, sobbing bitterly as she sat on the floor by the open box. 'Where, O where can these papers be ? It isn't because I want the cottage now father and mother are both gone,' she continued, drying her tears, and rising from the ground ; 'but I do so want to clear poor father's character, and not let people

think he could do such a dreadful thing, and pretend that Sir Edward had given the cottage to him when he hadn't. O those dreadful papers ! I wish I hadn't found them ; and what a time they've taken me ! I declare it's beginning to get dark. And now I've done all I could, and it's all no use,' she went on, as she placed the papers back in the desk and locked them up. While so doing, a sudden thought darted into her mind. 'Have you done all you could?' 'No,' replied Conscience ; 'I've not prayed to God to help me, but I will now. Help won't come from those papers, I know ; and perhaps He doesn't want me to keep the cottage after all ; He knows best, and I'll ask Him to guide me about it.'

The child of praying parents knew the value of prayer too well to neglect the suggestion which sent her to her knees in that empty room—empty to mortal sight, but not to the troubled girl, for God was there. She rose from her knees comforted and strengthened. Among other petitions she had asked that in some way her dear father's character might be cleared from the accusation of dishonourable conduct which Sir Thomas Wentworth had implied. She now felt the peaceful calm which always follows a truly earnest prayer, when offered in simple, child-like faith. Throwing herself on the bed, partially dressed,

that she might rise early on the morrow, she slept calmly, her last thoughts being those of wonder that she should have forgotten, from the day when the lost documents were missed, to tell her troubles to God, and ask Him for comfort and help.

Fred Forest came very early next morning with the horse and cart, to fetch her and her boxes. Patty, who had written two days before to tell Lady Wentworth on what day she would be at Parkhurst, was quite ready to return with her cousin to breakfast. Fred noticed that she was less excited and irritable than she had been for some weeks, and, as they drove along, he said, half in joke and half in earnest, 'Have you found what you were looking for, Patty?'

'No,' she replied; 'I'm going to wait patiently till it's found for me.'

'How long do you mean to wait *patiently*, Pat?'

'As long as God pleases,' she replied gravely; and Fred asked no more.





CHAPTER IX.

A LETTER FROM PARIS.

PATTY Thorne has been in her new home nearly a month, and yet she is sometimes at a loss in the midst of its customs and appliances, to which she is almost an entire stranger. How marvellously different to her are the velvet-piled carpets, the luxurious furniture, and, above all, the astonishing dinners, to the ways and doings of her cottage home !

‘I’m glad it’s not my work to clean the drawing-room,’ she said to the upper housemaid one day. ‘If I had to move and dust all those beautiful things and clocks and ornaments, I should break some of them from fright.’

‘Not you, Patty,’ was the reply ; ‘you’d soon get used to it. The things don’t make me afraid to touch them.’

‘Perhaps you’ve been used to houses like this,’ said Patty.

‘Well, yes, I have; not such beautiful furniture, though, as this. Why, Patty, some of these pictures and things belonged to my lady’s great-great-grandfather, and they are more than a hundred and fifty years old.’

‘O dear, that would make me ever so much more afraid to touch them,’ said Patty. ‘Why, till I came here, I never was in such a nice bedroom as mine is.’

‘Ah, you see, you’ve never been in place, so it all looks grand to you, Patty; but I remember how nice and pretty your little cottage used to look, when I came on a message from Sir Edward to your mother.’

‘Well,’ replied Patty, with a blush of satisfaction at her companion’s remark, ‘I own I used to be very proud of keeping the cottage nice. Perhaps I may want the furniture again some day, and I think Aunt Forest will take care of it till I do.’

Mason, the housemaid, did not reply; she and Patty were shaking up feather beds, and while at such employment it is not easy to talk; but her thoughts were busy. ‘I wonder what poor Patty’s furniture will look like after it has been used and knocked about, for two or three years, by those noisy

boys and girls. And then the tobacco smoke, nothing spoils furniture like that. O dear! what a pity it is that those papers can't be found! Patty could have easily got some respectable woman of forty or so to live with her, and pay something towards house-keeping. She's too young to get married yet, although she'd have been a good catch for any respectable and industrious young man, if Sir Thomas hadn't wanted the cottage. Poor child! it seems hard for her to go out to service after all, but I'm sure my lady will be kind to her for poor Thorne's sake.'

'Do you want me any longer, Mason?' asked Patty, as the arrangements of the bed were completed. 'I have some white crape to put on Miss Ethel's dress that she is going to wear this evening; but if you really want me, I'll stay.'

'No, no,' exclaimed Mason, starting from her reverie; 'I've kept you too long as it is, Patty; but, you see, we've been talking. Now run along to your own work; I oughtn't to have hindered you.'

'I'm always glad to help you, Mason,' was the reply, as the young girl bounded up the stairs, two at a time, to the rooms which were now spoken of as 'Patty's rooms,' although the bedroom alone was hers solely. The other, a large apartment, well furnished, and kept warm in winter with carpets and thick

curtains at door and windows, had been a nursery, and then a schoolroom, in the days when Lady Wentworth and her sisters had been young, and was still used and called 'the study' by Kate Wentworth, the youngest of Lady Wentworth's daughters. In this comfortable room, when it was not occupied by the governess or the masters, Patty would sit and work. For, as we know, she had been taught the intricacies of plain needlework by her poor mother—hand work, not machine work—so beautifully fine and delicately wrought that the possibility of its ever wearing out seemed totally out of the question. It was well for Patty that the young ladies would often keep her to active employment during the day; for these quiet times, while sewing and alone, would recall the past to her memory with full and painful force.

One morning, when Patty had been at Parkhurst for nearly three months, she was seated near the window at work, and Mason entered unexpectedly with a letter in her hand. Patty started up. 'For me, Mason?' she exclaimed, as she took the letter. 'What a wonderful thing! I never had a letter sent me in my life, excepting from my lady about the place. I wonder whom it's from.'

'Open it,' said Mason, laughing; 'then you'll soon know whom it's from.'

Patty obeyed, but as she read her face flushed with excitement, and she exclaimed,—

‘O, Mason, it’s from my dear father’s sister, who lives in France ; and now I remember there were two or three letters with my father’s papers that had such queer words in them, and I suppose they were French words ; but I didn’t know what they meant, and it wasn’t a name that I knew anything about.’

‘But your aunt’s name would be Thorne, if she was your father’s sister.’

‘Yes, so it was, but this isn’t Thorne now, is it, Mason ?’ exclaimed Patty, holding up the signature at the foot of the letter.

‘E. C-h-r-i-s-t-o-p-h-e,’ spelt Mason. ‘Why, that must mean Christopher in English. O, Patty, I understand it all now ! Your aunt’s been and gone and married a Frenchman, and of course her name is the same as his now.’

‘Mrs. Christopher !’ exclaimed Patty ; ‘O, how funny it sounds !’

“Madame,” not “Mrs.,” replied Mason ; ‘all the French women are called “Madame” in France, even if they’re only laundresses or servants, that is, if they’re married ; and if they’re not married, O, it’s such a long word I can’t pronounce it. The gentry do, though, but the working people always say “Mam’sel.”’

'However did you know all this, Mason?' asked Patty. 'Have you ever been to France?'

'Yes, a long time ago,' replied Mason; 'I was about as old as you are now, and I waited upon my mistress. She was a widow lady, with one daughter, a little older than me. We stayed in Paris—that's the great city of France—for a whole year.'

'But how did you manage, if you wanted anything?'

'O, my mistress and the young lady used to jabber French just as easy as if it was English. I soon picked up enough French to make people understand what I wanted; and before we came back to England my mistress said I'd got the French talk just like a French girl.'

And can you talk French now?' asked Patty.

'Not I,' she replied; 'why, it's twenty years ago nearly, and all the French words went out of my head as soon as I got back to old England.'

'And don't you remember any of them, Mason?'

'Well, yes, a few sentences come into my head sometimes; but, Patty, you're forgetting all about your letter. What does your aunt write to you for?'

'I'll finish it,' said Patty; 'that is, if I can, for the writing is so funny, and there's a lot of such queer words.'

'Shall I read it to you?' asked Mason. 'Your

aunt has been in France so long that she forgets her English, and, I dare say, puts French words instead. Ah yes, I thought so,' continued Mason, mumbling the words as she read, with now and then a remark which showed she was puzzled. 'Here she's got *portez* instead of "carry," and *venir* instead of "to come." No wonder you couldn't make it out.'

'It's clever of you, Mason,' said Patty, as the kind-hearted woman folded the letter and returned it to her. 'And now, what's made Aunt Lizzie write to me?'

'Why, she wants you to go and live with her in Paris, now she's a widow with a son and two daughters. She says they are very well off, and you would be so happy.'

'But, Mason, I wouldn't go away from dear England to stay all my life, like Aunt Lizzie has done, for all the world;' and the tears rose to the poor girl's eyes even at the thought of it.

'Who wants you to stay away from England all your life, Patty?' exclaimed a pleasant voice, as Kate Wentworth entered the room, startling the two servants, who rose and stood even in the presence of their lady's youngest daughter. 'Why, Patty, you have tears in your eyes. Have you been scolding her, Mason?'

'No, indeed, Miss,' said Mason; 'but Patty's had

a letter to-day from her aunt in Paris, and she wants Patty to go and live with her and her family.'

'And Patty is crying about it,' said Kate, laughing. 'Well, I wouldn't live all my life away from my own dear country. Besides, I don't want you to go away. So just write and tell your aunt you're very much obliged to her, but that you would rather stay with us, and not run away from dear old England.'

'Is there anything you wish me to do for you, Miss Kate?' asked Patty, as Mason, conscious that she had been hindering Patty, hastily made her escape.

'No,' she replied; 'I only came up to fetch a book I left here this morning. Ah yes, and it is a French grammar, too, Patty; and if you think of accepting your aunt's invitation, you will have to learn all this.' And as she spoke she drew nearer, and spread open the leaves before Patty, whose look of dismay so amused Kate that, laughing merrily, she left the room, saying, 'There's no place like old England after all, is there, Patty?'

When at last alone, Patty put the letter in her pocket, and, taking up her work, began to reflect. 'It's very kind of Aunt Lizzie to ask me to go and live with them, now I'm an orphan; but I'm sure I should be miserable in a place where I couldn't understand a word that was said to me; and, besides,

I'm so happy here in this beautiful house, and with these kind ladies.

'O yes, and I quite forgot about those papers ; I shall always believe that they will be found some day. It isn't because I want the cottage ; I couldn't live in it by myself ; I should be miserable. And I've had such dreadful sorrow in that cottage. Fred says, if it was really mine, I could sell it, and put the money in the bank ; but I don't want more money than I can earn. The only thing that makes me want to find those papers is, that I may clear my dear father's character, and show people that he couldn't have been so wicked as they say. I don't want the money ; I've got enough already in the Savings Bank. Yes, but I don't think there's enough to take me to France, even if I wanted to go ; and, besides, I couldn't go by myself. O no, it's no use ; I'll just stay where I am, and wait patiently till God pleases ; He will know best. If the time to clear up poor father's character never comes, it will be very hard to bear ; and I couldn't bear it now as I do, if I didn't feel sure that God will give me an answer to my prayers some day.'

'My lady wants you in the drawing-room, Patty,' were the words that disturbed Patty's reflections. She rose, and, smoothing herself down into neatness,

hastened to obey the summons, feeling sure it had to do with her aunt's letter.

'So you have had an invitation to visit your aunt in Paris, I hear, Patty?'

'Yes, my lady, but I can't go by myself, and I don't know their language; and please, my lady, I don't want to leave you and the young ladies at all.' And the tearful voice nearly choked the poor girl's utterance.

'Nor do I wish you to leave us, Patty,' said Lady Wentworth; 'but we have been talking over the matter; and, as I hope to take my daughters to Paris for a few months early in the summer, would you like to go with us, and to wait upon us as you do now? It would be easy then for you to visit your aunt and cousins, and thank her personally for her kindness in asking you.'

'O, my lady,' cried Patty, 'I should indeed like to go with you. I can't tell how to thank you enough, my lady; it's just exactly what I should like to do, and I will try to please you and the young ladies as much as I can.'

'Very well, Patty, then that's settled; and you can write and tell your aunt when to expect you, and that you are coming with me as my daughters' maid.'

How little Patty and her kind friends imagined what would be the result of this arrangement!



CHAPTER X.

THE DREADFUL ROOM.

IT is not easy to describe the sensations of a young cottage girl, brought up in all the simple, homely customs of rural life, when visiting for the first time a city such as Paris, the renowned capital of France. It is true Patty Thorne was well acquainted with the sea, as it appeared in the direction of the Nore from Southend pier ; and so the embarkation from the pier at Folkestone created in her mind less wonder and astonishment than the journey by rail to London, and the magnitude of the Langham Hotel, at which the family remained for one night. In fact, the noise and bustle of the streets, and the crowds of horses, carts, carriages, and passengers, passing and repassing in every direction, as she rode from Charing Cross in a cab with the other servants to Portland Place, so

bewildered her, that she was unable to utter a single word. Even when spoken to, she would shake her head and say, 'I can't hear.'

'Take Patty up to your rooms, Kate,' said Lady Wentworth. 'The servants will have to go up in the lift, and the poor child seems so nervous I am afraid to propose to her to accompany them.'

'Yes, indeed, mamma,' cried Kate; 'let her come up with us. I don't like the lift either, and we are only going up to the second flight of stairs. Why, they are so shallow,' added the young lady, laughing, 'that I could easily go up two at a time.'

'Not at all *comme il faut*, I should imagine, Kate,' said Laura, her eldest sister, as she turned to the said stairs, and followed with the rest of the travellers, accompanied by chambermaids.

On the first landing they stopped in front of what appeared to be a room without a door. To this the two women servants and Lady Wentworth's maid turned and entered, and the next moment the room rose in the air, causing Patty to start back in surprise and alarm.

'There's nothing to fear, Patty,' exclaimed Kate hastily, seizing Patty's arm. 'Come, we'll walk up stairs to our bedrooms; it is only one storey higher;' and, still holding Patty tightly, Kate turned to the

stairs and led the frightened girl with her to the upper landing. A chambermaid stood ready at the door to receive them ; and as Kate entered, she said, 'Come in, Patty ; mamma says there's a little room behind hers that will just do for you ; so you needn't go up to the room where the other servants are to sleep.'

Patty had stood outside while Kate spoke, and then, with a flush of shame, she became conscious that her foolish fear was in some way causing extra trouble to the servants.

'O, Miss Kate,' she exclaimed, 'oughtn't I to have gone up in that strange room ? O, I am so ashamed of my foolish fear ; please let me go up to the servants' rooms now.'

'No, nonsense, Patty ; come in here at once,' said Lady Wentworth. 'I'm not angry with you, child,' she added, as Patty entered with the tears streaming from her eyes.

'O, please send me back, my lady,' she exclaimed. 'I'm too stupid, and I shall be troublesome to you, I know I shall ;' and then, sinking into a chair, she fairly broke down and sobbed bitterly.

'Patty, don't be foolish,' said Lady Wentworth, after allowing the poor girl's tears to relieve her. 'I'm not angry with you ; but you are tired and

excited, and it's all new and strange to you. Now go into your little bedroom, and rest quietly, and presently I will send you up some supper ; and after you have eaten it and had a night's rest, you will laugh at your silly fears and be all right.'

'Thank you, my lady ; I'm sure I've been very silly ; please forgive me,' said Patty, as Lady Wentworth's own maid opened the door of the suite of rooms chosen by her ladyship.

'O yes, we all forgive you,' said Kate, laughing, as she followed her mother and sisters down to dinner ; 'and here comes your supper, Patty. After you have eaten it, you will forget all about your fright till you wake to-morrow morning.'

Patty's supper, however, did not prevent her from reflecting on her foolish conduct while she ate and enjoyed it.

'O, how silly I've been !' she said to herself ; 'and then to think of my being afraid to go up with Mason and Mrs. Lane ; yes, and the butler and James ; for they were all in the iron room. O dear, I shall see lots of strange things to frighten me in France, I dare say. Perhaps I shall get used to it all in time ; but I almost wish I hadn't come at all ; for I'm sure I can't think how my lady could be so kind to me, and not scold me ; but I will try not to be so

silly again.' And then, remembering her lady's orders to go to bed, Patty knelt and asked God to take away her fears, and to help her to do her duty in the kind family who so tried to make her happy.

The morning rose without a cloud; and the travellers left the hotel and started from Charing Cross by the 9.30 express for Folkestone, and crossed to Boulogne in one of the swift-sailing steamers at that period newly chartered for the daily voyage. During the journey to Folkestone Patty had to encounter no small amount of banter from her fellow servants, who had a second-class carriage to themselves.

'So you objected to be carried up no one knows where in a black box, Patty?' remarked Thomas the footman, the youngest of the party except herself.

'I know I did,' she replied, laughing; 'but I'd never seen such a place before as that dreadful room. Mason says it's called a lift—I suppose that's because it lifts people upstairs, and saves them the trouble of walking. I'm sure I'd rather walk than be hoisted up, like cranes hoist boxes and heavy things on board ship.'

'Ah yes,' said Mason; 'you know more about all that, don't you, Patty? But still it was right down silly to behave as you did yesterday.'

'Where did you think they were going to take you, Patty?' asked Thomas. 'Up to the roof in a black box?'

'I don't know what I thought,' she replied. 'I'd been half scared out of my wits by the lots of carriages and horses and people; but the dreadful noise was worse than all, and it sounded in my ears at night ever so long, and kept me from going to sleep.'

'Well, all I can say is that you are a regular little goose to go frightening yourself about nothing. Why, you wanted as much attention and taking care of as our young ladies.'

'A great deal more,' said Mrs. Lane, Lady Wentworth's maid. 'But don't tease her any more, Thomas,' she added, as she saw the tears rising to Patty's eyes. 'It's all very well for you to laugh, for you were brought up in London, and Patty has lived in a cottage in the country all her life, till she went to Parkhurst. And look, we're coming near Folkestone, and there's the sea.'

On board ship Patty was at home. Had she been so minded, she could have turned the laughter and jeering upon her companions; for, from childhood, she and her cousins had enjoyed many a trip to sea with her Uncle Forest, in one of the small yachts,



and of the terrible *mal de mer* she knew nothing. As they steamed out of Folkestone harbour, and dipped into the trough of the sea at its entrance with a plunge and a roll, Patty could have laughed at the pale, frightened faces of those on board who were starting on their first sea voyage. But she did nothing of the kind. Perfectly at home on the sea as on land, she very soon made herself useful to the passengers, who called the strong pleasant breeze from the south-east 'a gale,' and very soon succumbed to the painful sensations which 'good sailors' cruelly laugh at. Now and then the breeze stiffened, causing the steamboat to pitch and roll more than was agreeable; while many who sat on deck with pale faces resisted the temptation to go below, knowing too well what the result would be if they did.

Lady Wentworth and two of her daughters remained on deck. Kate only was so completely laid aside by the truly distressing malady, that she had been obliged to lie still in one of the saloons, under the tender care of Patty and the stewardess; for in this way alone could she prevent the dreaded attacks.

'Go to mamma, Patty,' said Kate quietly; 'she is ill sometimes. Don't mind me; the stewardess can do all I require.'

'The sea is not smooth to-day, Miss Kate,' replied

Patty; 'there's no doubt about that. I don't think my lady is ill; but I'll go on deck and see.'

Patty found Lady Wentworth and her daughters as we have described, and her ladyship's reply caused Patty's heart to bound with joy.

'We can all take care of ourselves up here, Patty. Go back to Miss Kate and the other ladies in the saloons; you can do some good there. I had no idea you were such a splendid sailor. The stewardess tells me she never had such help as yours on board ship in her life. Now go, my child,' she added, as she observed that the vivid blush of pleasure had brought the tears in Patty's eyes. 'No one will dare to laugh at your fears now, as I hear was the case this morning.'

Patty's heart was too full to speak; she could only attempt a curtsey, which nearly threw her off her balance, and then hastened to go below amidst the amused laughter of those on deck.

As the steamer neared Boulogne, the breeze calmed; yet in those days the entrance to the harbour, when the wind was in certain quarters, often occupied half an hour, and in stormy weather still longer. Such was the case on the May day of which we write; and it was nearly six o'clock when our travellers entered the train at Boulogne, with a

prospect of travelling for some hours before reaching Paris.

‘I’m no use now, my lady,’ said Patty piteously, as the whole party stood on the Quai de la Douane, beset with invitations in French and bad English to all the hotels in the town. But Lady Wentworth set them aside in perfect French; she was an old traveller, and needed no courier to accompany her when travelling abroad. The luggage was quickly passed through the custom house, and at once carried to the station, where they obtained slight refreshment in a French saloon, which Patty gazed at in surprise and wonder.

But it is impossible to relate all the incidents of that, to Patty, wonderful journey. The travellers reached Paris after midnight, and were all glad of a night’s rest after the fatigues of the past thirty-six hours. But, in spite of all, Patty was so anxious to see more of the beautifully lighted city and the thoroughfares crowded even at that late hour, that she woke early, and found to her delight that her bedroom window overlooked the broad street in which their hotel stood. How long she remained at the window Patty never knew, but she was startled by hearing the chimes of a neighbouring church ring out the hour of nine.

‘Nine o’clock!’ she exclaimed. ‘O, I wonder what I’m to do about breakfast; I feel quite hungry. I can’t go through my lady’s room; I dare not, for I should wake her, and’—

A door leading to the staircase, which Patty had mistaken for a cupboard, opened, and a voice exclaimed, ‘Why, Patty, what made you stay in your room instead of going down to breakfast?’

‘I didn’t know there was another door, Mason, she said in dismay; ‘and I’ve been up I’m sure more than an hour, looking out of the window.’

‘Well now, come and have some breakfast,’ said Mason, laughing; ‘and you must learn to *parlez-vous Français*, or you won’t get what you want, for nearly all the servants here speak French. However, come with me now; I’ll get you something to eat.’

Patty Thorne, with all her seeming nervousness, was a girl of quick perceptions and great intelligence. She had not been a week in Paris before she could ask for many articles she wanted in the language of the country. Her young mistresses were, however, greatly amused at the wondering delight with which she gazed at the sights and sounds that presented themselves at every point, while walking with Mason in the great and beautiful city. The wide streets, lofty buildings, beautiful churches, and, beyond all,

the Boulevards with their well-kept trees bordering the pavement, and protecting passengers from the sun's heat, were to Patty a wondrous sight.

'Why, the French people live out of doors, Mason !' she exclaimed one day, as they threaded their way along the broad pavement, where men and women were seated outside the restaurants, eating and drinking and talking so rapidly, that to Patty their language was, as she called it, 'gibberish.'

'And then their rooms are so tastefully furnished,' said Patty one day after a visit to the dressmaker to have a new dress tried on. 'There was a gold border all round the ceiling of the room, and pretty muslin curtains tied up with pink ribbon, and frills and lace round the sofas and chairs, and fringe and gold nails round the mantelshelf ; and then, when mademoiselle opened the door of her bedroom, I could see that the bed had thin muslin curtains, like those we have at our best room windows in England. But, Mason, I wonder they don't have carpets, instead of those dark boards on the floor.'

'There was a carpet, I think,' said Mason.

'Yes, a small square piece in the middle of the room ; and they have just the same at the hotel where we are staying. Why don't they use deal boards like ours for the floors ?'

‘All the old houses in France are built with these boards for floors, Patty; they are made of oak, and polished with beeswax till they look like mahogany, and that makes them so slippery for English people to walk upon.’

‘O yes, I remember, I nearly slipped down once. The boards look handsome, I’ll own that; but I like the carpets we have at Parkhurst best.’

But, after a drive through the principal streets of the beautiful city with Mason and Mrs. Lane, and a visit to the Louvre and its pictures, and seeing the Arc de Triomphe and other wonders of sculpture and painting, and then walking in the Champs Elysées and the gardens of the Tuileries, and visiting Père la Chaise, the great Paris cemetery, she seemed so fascinated with it all that Lady Wentworth said to her one day,—

‘Patty, you seem so delighted with Paris, should you like to stay here always with your aunt and cousins?’

A deep flush rose to the girl’s face, as she replied, ‘O, my lady, I quite forgot all about them. O, may I go and see them to-day? I’m sure I did not mean to be so unkind, and I’ve forgotten the address, but it’s on the letter in my desk.’

‘Well, find the letter, Patty,’ said Lady Wentworth, ‘and Mason shall take you to see them to-day.’



CHAPTER XI.

MADAME CHRISTOPHE.

MA MÈRE ! *une voiture et des dames qui s'arrêtent ici ; voilà !* And, as she spoke, a young girl of sixteen ran out of a milliner's shop in the Rue St. Honoré, and presented herself at the carriage door.

'Can I speak to Madame Christophe?' asked a lady, in French.

'*Oui, Madame, certainement ;*' but as the girl turned to summon her mother, Madame Christophe herself made her appearance. There was a something in the voice and manner of the lady who had asked for Madame Christophe, which convinced Madame that the visitor was *une dame Anglaise*, and belonged to the higher class in English society ; and the fact that she was about to give a large order to the milliner seemed more certain when the footman was desired to

open the carriage door, that the lady might alight. To Madame Christophe's surprise, however, a young, plainly dressed girl followed the lady into the large and elegant shop. The hour was rather an early one for fashionable business people, and scarcely any customer of importance was present. Lady Wentworth seated herself in the chair placed for her, and then said in French,—

‘Madame, I have brought your young niece, Patty Thorne, your late brother's orphan child.’

Poor Patty! she was scarcely prepared for the very demonstrative reception which she received from her aunt and cousin. The words of delight at her arrival, the warm embraces and ardent expressions of love and affection, even if translated into English, would never enable an English girl to realize the scene which occurred at the meeting of Patty with her aunt and cousins.

‘Then I may leave Patty with you for to-day, Madame Christophe?’ said Lady Wentworth, rising.

‘With pleasure, my lady,’ replied Patty's aunt in English, to Patty's great relief. She had listened to the French conversation in silence, and for the first time felt at ease when her aunt spoke in English. But the English ceased to be so pleasant as Madame Christophe remarked, in continuation, ‘But I hope,

my lady, now my niece is here, that she will make up her mind to stay in France and live with us. She shall be taught the business, which, I assure you, my lady, is one most prosperous.'

'There can be no doubt of it, I should imagine, from its position and appearance,' said her ladyship; 'but all that you speak of must be an after consideration. And now, Madame, I must ask you to excuse me, as the carriage waits.'

'Certainly, Madame; pray pardon me for detaining you,' Madame Christophe replied. 'At what hour shall I send Patty to your hotel?'

'I will take care to send for her in time, thank you, Madame. Good-bye, Patty,' continued the lady, as she passed out, while more than one passer-by, glancing at the carriage in which were seated Lady Wentworth and her daughters, remarked in a subdued tone, '*Voilà les belles Anglaises!*'

Then the new relations, to whom Patty had been for the first time introduced, led her upstairs to a large, tastefully furnished room, in which luncheon was prepared, and then to a pretty room with muslin hangings to the bed and windows, which Patty could not help calling 'grand' in their glitter of gold, tinsel, and bright colours. She took off her simply trimmed black straw bonnet and cape, and showed herself in a

plain black dress, relieved by white linen cuffs and a collar fastened by a black jet brooch; and stood before her aunt and cousins a veritable picture of a fair, rosy English girl.

At luncheon Patty was somewhat startled by the entrance of a dark-eyed young man, whose age she could not guess, and who looked earnestly at the fair English face, causing a blush to rise, as he exclaimed in broken English,—

‘Is this *ma cousine* from England?’

‘Yes; I am Patty Thorne,’ she said; ‘and are you my cousin, sir?’

‘Yes, yes,’ replied her cousin Elise, in French. ‘Alphonse. I thought *la mère* had told Patty.’

‘No,’ exclaimed a voice in English, as the door opened and Madame Christophe entered. ‘So nobody spoke to you of your Cousin Alphonse, my only boy? Didn’t you feel very awkward when he addressed you, *mon enfant*?’

‘No,’ said Patty; ‘I guessed who it was. But you called him a boy, aunt; and he’s a big man with a beard and whiskers and a moustache.’

There was a general laugh at this description, and such rapid talk in French, with gesticulations, while the luncheon proceeded with equal rapidity, that Patty felt as if she herself were out of breath.

‘We are always busy at this hour of the day, and till five o’clock,’ said Madame; ‘so, Patty, you must not be surprised that we move about quickly; but we have supper, or dinner, as some call it, at seven o’clock, after our work is done; and I think it is much nicer than your early dinners in England.’

‘I can’t get used to it,’ said Patty; ‘and we servants have what we call supper at eight, which is almost as late as yours, aunt.’

‘O yes, in a gentleman’s or a nobleman’s house it makes no difference to the servants; but in a business like ours it would never do. And now I must go down to my customers, dear Patty; and I think I can spare Elise to sit with you; she knows English pretty well.’

‘O no, aunt, please,’ exclaimed Patty. ‘I would rather sit here alone and look out of window, if I may. This great city is like a show to me.’

Madame Christophe laughed merrily, as she replied, ‘Do as you like, *mon enfant*. I wish you to have a liking for this country; and if you do make up your mind to live with us, Patty, and learn the business, you will be very happy.’ So saying, Madame kissed her newly-found niece, and left her to her own reflections.

As soon as Patty found herself alone, she drew a chair near the window, and looked out on the scene

before her, which she had already spoken of as a grand 'show.' For a time she was amused by the lively panorama which presented itself to her wondering eyes, making her almost giddy as it whirled past. But, before long, she got tired of the monotony of the unceasing procession of men and women and vehicles of all sorts; and, drawing her chair back from the window, she began to reflect.

'Paris is a wonderful place,' she said to herself, 'but not so dreadful as London. There's plenty of noise here, but it all seems so gay and pretty, not like that dreadful place, London Bridge. And then the streets here are so broad and clean, and the people all seem so happy, and are dressed so beautiful; and, though the sunshine makes it very hot, those blinds over the pavement in front of the shops keep it cool, besides those trees on the Boulevards. I wonder what that name comes from; it's easy enough to say *Boulevards*, but I'm sure I should never be able to pronounce those French words that the people speak. And how they do gabble! If they would only not talk so fast, it would be easier. My lady doesn't gabble French when she speaks it; and I'm sure I shall soon understand the French talk, if I hear it from my lady and the young ladies every day for three months.'

For a few moments these reflections were interrupted by a servant entering the room, arrayed in the simple but neat dress, white frilled apron, and white muslin cap, which are distinctive of her class in France. Nothing more picturesque than these rosy-faced, dark-eyed French girls, as they flit to and fro on the *trottoirs*, with their neat shoes and knitted stockings, and their smooth shiny hair, can be met with in the streets of Paris. Her appearance led Patty into another train of thought, and she recalled to herself what a contrast the fishwomen on the beach at Boulogne presented to those in our dear old England. When Patty had reached that picturesque port, Mason, anxious that she should see as much as possible, proposed that they should walk along the Quai de la Douane to the railway station—not a very long distance. Short as it was, they met at least half a dozen of these fishwomen, at whom Patty stared in astonishment.

‘Do French people all dress like that, Mason?’ she asked, adding quickly, ‘O look, there are two more;’ and then, fearing she had been rude, she blushed and said, ‘O, Mason, I hope they didn’t hear me!’

‘Not they,’ laughed Mason. ‘Why, they can’t understand a word you say.’

‘O, I forgot; but who are they, Mason?’

‘Fishwomen, Patty; and listen — here we are coming to the auction mart, where they sell the fish by auction. Just listen to their gabbling.’

It was more than gabbling; for, as they drew nearer, two women were quarrelling with shrill fierce voices that almost frightened Patty. They were standing close to an enormous quantity of fish of all descriptions, which had just arrived in the fishing boats, and was now laid in heaps, or lots, to be disposed of by the auctioneer’s hammer; and while the women waited for his appearance, a dispute of some kind had arisen, which provoked the quarrel we have referred to. Just as Mason and her young companion arrived opposite the fish mart, one of the women had seated herself in silence, while the other stood at a very short distance, venting her rage in a flow of rapid, furious words, and evidently half beside herself with anger. Suddenly the other woman rose, and, taking up a large sole from the bench behind her, lifted her strong bare arm, and slapped her adversary’s cheek with the cold slimy fish. The shouts of laughter which followed, and the appearance of the auctioneer, put an end to the silly quarrel, and Mason and Patty hastened on their way, highly amused at this their first experience of the Boulogne fishwomen.

Patty had tried to fix in her mind the figures of two or three fishwomen, who seemed to be types of the rest, although some were neater and cleaner than others. What she remembered of their costume was this: a full all round short skirt of thick material, and closely plaited at the waist, a bodice of a thinner stuff, with sleeves to the elbows, open at the throat, showing a white neckerchief underneath, long gold earrings, hair smoothed and in shining bands under a white linen cap, grey knitted stockings fitting closely, and *sabots*—wooden shoes.

Once, when Patty was talking to Mason with great interest about the fishwomen, whose dress she so much admired, Mason said to her,—

‘You should see the fishwomen at Calais, Patty, with their Normandy caps made of white thick muslin, and stiffened so that they stand up a foot high on the head, and have lappets and frills, and strings hanging down.’

‘O, how strange!’ cried Patty. ‘I don’t think I should like these caps so well. Doesn’t it make them look queer?’

‘No, not when you’re used to it; and I can tell you, Patty, some of the women look so pretty in the caps, I believe it suits them better than any other cap would.’

And now, as Patty sits at the window in her aunt's saloon, she recalls all these matters, and reflects upon them, and asks herself whether it would be wise to give up the dear old country in which she was born, to come and live with her aunt in a strange country, and learn to be a fashionable milliner and costumière.

'It's very kind of Aunt Lizzie to offer me such a situation, but I don't think I shall ever learn to like France as well as England. O,' she continued almost aloud, 'I'm forgetting all about dear father and those papers. I'm sure they must be somewhere. I know poor father would never say the cottage was his if it wasn't. They'll be coming up soon, I suppose, and then there'll be dinner, and Mason will come for me; and somehow I feel glad, although I don't like the hotel here so well as dear old Parkhurst.' Another pause in her reflections, and then suddenly, 'I know what I'll do if they ask me to come and live with them. I'll ask my lady to spare me for a week, and then I shall find out whether I should like to stay with them always. I like my aunt—she puts me in mind of dear father—and Elise and Marie are dear girls. But I don't like Alphonse. He frightens me with his great black eyes and his beard, and he isn't a bit like Aunt

Lizzie ; but perhaps I shall get used to him if I see him oftener.'

How little Patty imagined that this bearded cousin, her aunt's eldest child, would be the means of doing her a service which she would never have supposed to be possible !





CHAPTER XII.

POOR LITTLE FANNY.

MOTHER,' said a faint voice, 'I'm awake.
'May I have my breakfast?'

'Yes, darling,' and the mother, thus
appealed to, bustled into the neat but
tiny bedroom, where lay her sick daughter, a girl
about fourteen years of age, and said, 'Your break-
fast is nearly ready, pet. You've had such a nice
sleep. I came in two or three times to look at you,
but you didn't move.'

'I always feel better after my sleep in the morning,
mother,' said the sick girl; 'and when I don't sleep I
have one of my bad days, and don't care for my
breakfast. O, if I could only sleep at night, I
should soon get well, I think.'

'I wish you could sleep better, dear Fanny; but
see, here comes your breakfast—a nice egg and some

toast. Sally takes care of her dear sister while mother is busy in the shop, doesn't she ?'

Sarah Forest, as she placed the little tray containing her sister's breakfast on the bed-table, stooped and kissed the fair pale face, and said gently as she raised her,—

'Do you really feel better this morning, dear ?'

'O yes,' she said ; 'and my breakfast looks so nice, I'm sure I shall be able to eat some ; and then, Sally dear, will you wash my face and do my hair ? I always feel so comfortable after that.'

'Yes, yes, darling, but don't talk any more now. Eat your breakfast, and then, when you have rested for a little while, I'll come up and make you quite smart,' replied Sarah with a pleasant smile.

An hour or two passed, the invalid's bed was made, and the smart appearance spoken of by Sarah completed to the satisfaction of the loving sister ; yet *smart* was not a suitable word to express the sweetly attractive appearance of Fanny Forest. The large blue eyes, sunken yet brilliant, the small, pale, fair face and delicate features, the hectic flush on each cheek, round which the golden curls lay scattered on the pillow, needed no words to realize the fact that consumption had claimed its victim.

The Rev. Henry Melville, who in his day was

named by the *Times* 'the prince of modern preachers,' on one occasion preached a sermon in All Souls' Church, Regent Street, for the Brompton Consumption Hospital, and, in the course of his eloquent discourse, made this remark: 'Consumption, which flings its brilliant mockery in the mother's eyes!' Those who have lost friends from this fatal disease can realize the truth of his words, and none could have done so more truly than the family of Tom Forest, whose youngest daughter was slowly but surely passing away.

So bright, so lovely was the appearance of the afflicted girl, whose highly-wrought nerves, when a child of seven, had caused such a commotion on the day of the school treat, six years ago, that poor Mrs. Forest would sometimes declare her conviction that 'dear Fanny could not be going to die, she looked so rosy and well.' But the truth became self-evident at last. The child of weak nerves had never been strong, and perhaps the excitement to which she had been subject on the day we refer to laid the foundation of the disease from which she was dying in spite of her mother's hopes and opinions.

But was not this trial sent to the loving family of Tom Forest to draw their thoughts away from earth to the heaven so soon to be Fanny's home? Amid the

weakness and suffering of illness, even before she was confined to her bed, Fanny recalled the teachings of her Sunday school. She was not a shy child, excepting on religious subjects; and yet to her teacher she would open her heart, more especially on those summer days when Miss Austin would take her home with her to tea, and many a long talk would take place in that young lady's room after tea, which Fanny recalled while lying unable to rise on the bed which was so soon to be a bed of death.

Perhaps no trial could have been sent so calculated to startle the robust, hard-working, money-getting family of Tom Forest, as the prospect of a death among them, and that the death of a dearly loved daughter. Long before her life appeared in danger Fanny had endeared herself to every member of her loving family, and, now that the doctors had declared the case hopeless, all but one bowed sadly to the decree, and that one was the mother.

'O, she cannot be going to die,' she said one day to Dr. Andrews. 'God will not be so cruel as to take away my darling child—so young, too. O, doctor, can you not save her?'

'Not unless it is God's will, Mrs. Forest. Do not look at the dark side, my dear friend. Only reflect how kind He has been to you for so many

years. You have never yet lost a child, and your sons and daughters are, with this one exception, healthy and industrious young people. They never need the doctor. Your husband is still in the prime of manhood, and you have been blessed with good health for years. How different to the sorrows of your sister and her husband, John Thorne, and even poor Patty's position—father, and mother, and lands all gone! Come, come, dry your tears; try to submit to God's will,' he added, rising as he shook hands. 'What He orders must be for the best.'

Mrs. Forest let the doctor out, and returned to her best sitting-room upstairs, and then, seating herself, began to reflect. 'I'm afraid I have been very ungrateful to Almighty God for all those mercies the doctor spoke of, and I know we often forgot to thank Him or to pray to Him at nights or in the mornings. But, O dear, there never seemed no time for reading the Bible even, though we've always done that on Sundays. Ah yes! and I remember, on Sundays, when dear Fanny would bring her little chair and sit down by me and say, "Mother, let me read this chapter to you, or some of those pretty hymns they learnt at Sunday school," I used to say "Yes," and then, if she began to read, I went fast asleep. But I don't do that now. I try to read to Fanny some-

times, but I can't do it long ; I'm sure to have the tears come, and then my darling puts up her hand to my face and says, " You needn't read any more, mother, aloud ; I know it all by heart. Read it when you're by yourself ; I'm sure it will make you more happy." "

Perhaps, after all, Tom Forest felt the loss of his dear Fanny more than all the rest, when he stood by the side of the open coffin to take one last look at all that remained on earth of his darling child. The waxen face, the features moulded by death into more perfect symmetry, the golden curls which had escaped from the cap, were so like Fanny's appearance in her lifetime, that Mrs. Forest rushed from the room in an agony of grief, which her second girl, Nellie, who followed her, could scarcely prevent from resulting in a fit of hysterics.

They laid the fair remains in the grave, but the influence of that little Christian child on every member of that household was never lost. Her death occurred while Patty was at Parkhurst. Lady Wentworth had known and loved the young girl from childhood, and on leaving Leigh Court after Sir Edward's death, she gave her a beautifully bound copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. How that book was preserved, and cherished, and read after Fanny's death by her mother, can be well understood.

Nearly two years have elapsed since that sorrowful event. Patty Thorne is in Paris with the household of Lady Wentworth, and the family of Tom Forest are becoming more reconciled to their loss. Yet the influence of that lost daughter still lives and rules in the hearts of every member of the household.

One morning Tom Forest and his son Fred were having an early breakfast before starting, with the horse and cart, to fetch luggage from a gentleman's house at some distance, and to carry it to the station to meet the 7.20 train to London. On their way they had to pass the White Cottage, in which Patty had experienced so much sorrow.

'I wonder what Sir Thomas is going to do with Thorne's cottage,' said the young man, as they drew near the spot. Then he added hurriedly, 'Why, father, there's scaffolding up; they're never going to pull it down, I hope.'

'No doubt they are, my boy,' said his father. 'Sir Thomas is too sharp a landlord not to try to make some profit out of well-cultivated land like that.'

'O, what a jolly shame it is,' cried Fred, 'to go and pull down that pretty cottage that's been standing there for more than a hundred years! They don't build such cottages now. And I don't care what people say, I feel certain this place was

Uncle John's, and now it belongs to Patty, and she ought to have it. Uncle was too good a man to tell lies about the house being his.'

'Ah yes, my son, it's all very well to talk; but where can those papers be that your aunt used to talk about?'

'Perhaps Sir Thomas has burnt 'em,' replied Fred under his breath.

'Hush, Fred! you'll get taken up for libel if you say anything like that. Sir Thomas isn't a man to stand what he'd call an insult.'

Fred remained silent for a little distance as they drove on, and then he said, 'I say, gov'nor, wouldn't those papers, or whatever they're called, be drawn up by a lawyer?'

'Well, yes, I suppose they would; but what lawyer is it, and where does he live? O, there's a lot against it all, and so we had best leave it alone.' Then he added reverently, 'God Almighty knows best; and if He pleases, those papers will be found out some day.'

Tom Forest and his son drove on in silence, reflecting with no very kind feelings on the selfishness of Sir Thomas Wentworth, and contrasting his doings with those of Sir Edward.

'It's my belief,' reflected Tom, 'that Sir Thomas

does know where those papers are, and they're hid away somewhere ; he'd never dare to burn them, I reckon ; and I suppose he's been waiting all this while, nearly a year, before he'd touch the cottage, to see if there was any chance of those papers being found. I wonder Sir Edward did not mention them in his will ; but, if he'd given the cottage to Thorne already, it wasn't wanted.'

Then, suddenly rousing up to the business in hand, Tom became aware that Jack was taking his own time over his work, and wanted a *very slight* touch of the whip to rouse up his sleepy faculties.

'Get on, Jack. Why, what are you about ? going to sleep, eh ?' said his master, whose voice seemed enough to rouse the docile creature, without even a slight touch of the whip. Tom Forest was a true lover of animals, and specially kind to his horse, which was almost like a human being in its love for both master and children. On this occasion, Jack, roused to a sense of his duty, carried his masters along at a rapid rate. On arriving at the house, Tom loaded his cart with the luggage, and proceeded with it to the Southend station, reaching home in time to give Jack his breakfast, and have a little talk about the White Cottage with his family.

But the news had arrived there before him.

'O father,' exclaimed Sarah, his eldest girl, 'they're pulling down Uncle Thorne's cottage ! Farmer Davy's wife told me so just now, when she was buying something at the shop. O, I wonder how the gentry that have got heaps of money and land can be so cruel !'

'Sir Thomas has got the law on his side, my girl,' said her father; 'and of course, as there are no papers to prove that the place belonged to your uncle, it belongs to the estate, and Sir Thomas can do as he likes with it.'

'Ah yes !' said his wife; 'and he's got the money too ; we poor folks can't stand agin that.'

During the day, which happened to be market day, Ellen Forest did what she called a great stroke of business. One after another came in to purchase trifles, that they might learn more about the fate of John Thorne's cottage, and gather more information respecting the actual right of his daughter to claim it. As usual, opinions were divided on the matter. Some harshly declared that very likely Sir Edward lent Thorne the cottage rent free, and never meant Patty Thorne to have it at her father's death. Others took side with Patty, and freely abused Sir Thomas for his conduct. But where, after all, were the papers to prove that Sir Edward had given Thorne the cottage ?



CHAPTER XIII.

LADY WENTWORTH.

TWO months of the three have passed, during which Lady Wentworth had decided to remain in Paris, to give her youngest daughter a more perfect knowledge of the language. The two elder girls, Laura and Ethel, had spent two years in Germany, and spoke German with ease. Association with her sisters, and the instruction received from her German master, had rendered Kate capable of carrying on conversation in German without the necessity of a visit to Germany.

These two months had also brought about a better understanding between Patty and her French relatives than existed when she left them after her visit of one day to the Rue St. Honoré.

Lady Wentworth, anxious that she should have

every opportunity of meeting her cousins and discovering her own real feelings towards them, kindly allowed Patty to visit them on every possible occasion, but never alone ; and Mason, who had taken a great liking for the young girl, was always ready to accompany her. This association gave Patty frequent opportunities of hearing French spoken ; and so well did she improve them that in less than the two months of her stay she had acquired from a French grammar, and the conversation at her aunt's, quite enough knowledge of the language to understand what was said to her, and to make herself easily understood.

Patty had got over her repugnance to the dark eyes and black beard of her cousin, and one day she said to her aunt, 'Alphonse has bought me a French grammar, aunt, and it helps me so much ; and he's given me a French story to translate into English, and lent me an English dictionary, or else I couldn't do it a bit ; and he helps me when I can't find out a word in the dictionary.'

'And you like being with us after all, then, Patty ?'

'O yes, dear aunt, I do now ; but at first I couldn't bear France nor the people ; but you've all been so kind to me that I feel quite happy when I'm with you.'

'And have you made up your mind yet about staying with us altogether, Patty?'

'No, aunt; and I'm so sorry! I'm afraid I should never like to live in France; it's all so different, although it seems better now than it did before I understood a little French; but even now, when people talk fast, I can't tell a bit what they mean.'

'Ah, well, dear, there's another month yet; perhaps you'll change your mind in that time. I know you've got a good place, and a first-rate mistress too; but with me you won't be a servant, but a relation, and be called a young lady, and dress prettily, and wear no caps; only servants and nurses wear caps in France.'

'O,' laughed Patty, 'I like those pretty caps the servants wear here; my lady lets me wear them; and besides, I am a servant to her ladyship, and you know I'm called "young ladies' maid."''

Madame Christophe laughed in her turn, as she replied, 'You like the pretty caps, Patty? Well, so do I, and many other things the French do and what they wear. But when I first came to France as an upper servant, I couldn't bear the place nor the people; and that's nearly thirty years ago; and now I hope to live here till I die. But do as you like, child; I won't attempt to influence you; and a

thought has just occurred to me. Do you think Lady Wentworth would spare you to stay with us for a week? You would know us all and our ways so much better by that time. Suppose I write a little note to her ladyship, and you can take it with you this evening when Mason comes for you. I don't think she will refuse my request. Should you like it yourself, Patty?' said Madame suddenly, turning from her desk as she spoke.

'O yes indeed, very much,' replied Patty; 'and, if the young ladies and Mrs. Lane can spare me, I am almost sure my lady will let me come.'

'Very well, then, dear Patty; I'll write at once, and quickly too, for it's very nearly Mason's time for coming for you.'

The note did not occupy many minutes to write, but those few minutes were enough for Patty's reflections. 'I don't mind staying with aunt for a week; it's very kind of her to ask it for me, and I know I shall enjoy myself; but it won't make me forget about those lost papers to clear dear father's character, and I must go to England again with my lady to find them.'

'Here is the note, Patty,' were the words that broke in upon Patty's reflections. 'Would you like to read it?'

Patty took the missive from her aunt, but at one glance she saw it would be impossible to decipher such a mixture of French and English. Madame Christophe, in spite of her Parisian French and elegant appearance in her business, was at once seen by Lady Wentworth, as she read the note, to be a woman of no education, and not for a moment to be compared to her brother, John Thorne. Patty's father had not only been able to read and write well, but, in his love for garden work, had studied books lent to him by Sir Edward on botany and horticulture with the deepest interest. And we know with what neatness, order, and care the papers so carefully looked over by Patty were arranged. But we know also that Madame Christophe's letters, when found by Patty, were to her quite unreadable, from the mixture of badly spelt English and French words, and the almost illegible writing. Lady Wentworth, with difficulty, but no little amusement, deciphered the letter sufficiently to arrive at its real meaning. Then she sent for Patty, and asked,—

‘Have you read this note, Patty?’

‘No, my lady ; but I know what it is about.’

‘And should you like to accept this invitation?’

‘Yes, my lady, if you can spare me for so long as a week.’

‘Your aunt thinks you will become better acquainted with these relatives,’ said Lady Wentworth, ‘who are really very kind to you in wishing you to reside with them altogether ; and no doubt, after being associated daily for a week with these kind people, you will know more of them, and be able to decide what is best for you to do when the time comes for us to leave Paris. I am therefore quite willing to give you a week’s holiday, and I hope you will enjoy yourself.’

‘Thank you, my lady,’ said Patty, curtsying as she turned to leave the room.

‘Stay one moment, Patty,’ said Lady Wentworth. ‘I want to remind you that you cannot expect a blessing on your decision, unless you daily ask for guidance from above ; and, when that is done, you must leave your future in God’s hands ; He will act for you.’

‘Yes, my lady, I will. I have done so before, my lady,’ she added, while a deep blush spread over her face.

‘Then, my child, you need not fear, and I can trust *you* while you trust *Him* with perfect confidence. Would you like a portion of your wages, Patty ?’ added Lady Wentworth quickly, as Patty turned to go.

'I have a few shillings left, my lady,' she replied. 'I think they will be enough.'

'No, lock them up and save them for another time ; and here is my present of half a sovereign for you, but don't spend it foolishly.'

'No, my lady, indeed I won't,' replied Patty, with quivering lips and her eyes full of tears. 'I thank your ladyship so much, but I don't know how to do it properly.'

'I know all you would say if you could, Patty ; and now go and get ready for to-morrow, to visit your friends.'

Patty curtsied in silence and left the room.

'O mamma,' exclaimed Miss Wentworth, 'who would have thought that such an elegantly dressed lady, who spoke French so well as Madame Christophe, could be so uneducated ?'

'Well, my dear, it may be accounted for easily. When Madame Christophe came to Paris, she was just such another simple-hearted, straightforward girl as her niece Patty ; and I believe that she is now an honourable woman of business and very much respected. But she was fond of dress and fine clothes, and the gay doings in Paris ; and to her great delight she soon obtained a situation in a milliner's shop, with very small wages, however, far less than she had

received in England. This she did not care for ; and, having a large amount of energy, she soon learnt to speak Parisian French as she heard it spoken by the higher class ladies who visited the millinery and dressmaking establishment in which she was at first only a servant. And so she got on at last to be a mistress herself, and became so clever at the business that she was taken into partnership ; and when the head of the firm died the whole business was left to Lizzie Thorne.'

'And she married a Frenchman, I suppose, mamma ?'

'Yes,' replied Lady Wentworth, 'but he has been dead several years. I believe he was a kind husband and father, and when he died he had held one situation in a mercantile office for many years. The loss of his stipend would have been felt still more but that his wife's industry in her business had placed her in a position above want.'

'Mamma,' exclaimed Kate presently, 'was Monsieur Christophe a Roman Catholic ?'

'No, my dear, although his father was ; but he had an English mother, and from her he learned the true principles of Christianity.'

'Then that is the reason Madame Christophe never keeps her shop open on a Sunday, and goes to the

Protestant church like we do ; I've seen her there more than once with her son and the two girls. O, I'm so glad ! I was wondering what Patty would do if they took her to one of the Roman Catholic churches while she is staying with them ; but Roman Catholics are Christians, mamma, are they not ? and they believe in Christ ?'

'Yes, dear Kate, and many thousands of people in the world who are Romanists are true Christians at heart ; only their priests teach them to believe so many things which are not in the Bible. But we have no right to judge others ; God, Who knows the heart of every one of His creatures, will judge them and all of us on the last great day.'

The luncheon bell put an end to the conversation, and in less than an hour after a *fiacre*, or 'cab,' drove up to the hotel with Elise Christophe, to fetch Patty and her boxes. Both Mrs. Lane and Mason came with her to the entrance to see her off ; and, short though the time of absence was to be, Mason detected the tears in Patty's eyes as the *fiacre* drove off.

A pleasant welcome awaited Patty in the Rue St. Honoré. The July sun shone down on the pavement, only partly shaded by the sloping blinds stretched over it ; but the dining-room upstairs was in deep shadow, and through the open windows came the

perfume of sweet flowers growing in a tiny garden beyond. Altogether it felt deliciously cool, as Patty and her cousin entered, and were received by her aunt and Marie with the usual demonstrativeness of our vivacious neighbours.

Patty was taken at once to a pretty little bedroom, most tastefully arranged ; her two small boxes were unpacked and their contents carefully placed away in drawers or wardrobes. Then she was left, and, to her great amusement, told to lie on the little sofa in her room and rest ; a new English book was placed in her hands, and, after telling her to read herself to sleep, her cousins left the room.

Patty's first impulse was to laugh heartily, but she restrained herself ; and, partially acceding to her cousins' request, she sat down and leaned back, for the quiet room tempted her to reflection.

'Well,' she said, 'I suppose this is what ladies do ; but the idea of my sleeping in the day-time while the sun is shining ! Why, I never did such a thing in my life, at least since I was a baby, and I'm not going to begin now. How kind they are, though ! It would be nice, I dare say, to be here always ; but then, if I should learn aunt's business, I shall not have time for going to sleep, for aunt and cousins are always busy. I wonder what this book is about,' she con-

tinued, taking it in her hand. 'O, I see ; I'll just read a bit ; it's better than doing nothing.'

A quarter of an hour passed. The book lay on the floor, and Patty was fast asleep ! Not for long, however ; a slight noise in an adjoining room was sufficient to arouse her. She started up and exclaimed, ' Why, I've been to sleep after all ! O how stupid ! I'll just go and see where they all are. I wonder if I can find my way down. I'll take the book, and then, if no one is in the dining-room, I can read.'

Patty's account of her determination not to sleep, and sleeping after all, was a source of great amusement at the dinner-table. Alphonse was rather inclined to joke his cousin, but she had got more used to his love of fun, and took it all in such good part that he seldom indulged in it now. During the week, as Madame Christophe had expected, the young people became quite at home with each other, and more than once Patty delighted her aunt by asking if she might try her hand at some dressmaking or millinery.

'I never do any dirty work or scrubbing or cleaning now, aunt,' she said ; 'so my hands are getting quite clean and soft, and you need not be afraid that I shall soil my work.'

Patty, as we know, was an intelligent girl, and the teachings of her mother had made her a first-rate

needlewoman in plain work; so that she not only pleased but surprised her aunt by the neat and clever way in which she finished the task placed in her hands.

The last day but one of this pleasant week was passing away, when Patty, wishing to write to Lady Wentworth to say she hoped to return to the hotel on the morrow, brought down her desk—the desk which had already so greatly disappointed her. Opening the front part, after placing it on the table, she took out pen and paper, and wrote a note such as would not have disgraced her young mistress Kate.

It was soon finished, and Patty was carefully folding it, when Alphonse came in unexpectedly.

‘Why, Patty, what are you doing with my desk?’ he asked in French.

‘*Your* desk!’ she replied. ‘Why, Alphonse, it is my own. I would not be so rude as to open your desk and use it.’

‘Well, it’s exactly like mine,’ he replied. ‘I can’t stay now, but I’ll show it you to-morrow, or this evening, if you like it better.’

‘Yes, I should,’ she said; ‘don’t forget, Alphonse.’



CHAPTER XIV.

THE TWO DESKS.

PATTY remembered to bring down her desk next morning, when she joined the family at their first meal at twelve o'clock. In France it is the custom for each person to have a cup of coffee and a biscuit while dressing in his or her bedroom, and nothing more is taken till twelve o'clock, when they assemble to take a really substantial breakfast. This they call *déjeuner à la fourchette*, 'a breakfast with forks.' It would be like our luncheon in some respects, but that the fare is lighter, and *café au lait* is drunk instead of *vin ordinaire*, a cheap wine which supplies the place of beer in France.

When Alphonse came in, Patty saw with astonishment that the desk he carried under his arm was exactly like her own, and her first impulse, as he put

it by hers on a side table, was to rise and compare the two. But she recollected herself in time, and restrained her impatience till her aunt rose from table.

Then she started up, exclaiming, 'You're not going off again to your office yet, I hope, Alphonse ; I want to know how you came to have a writing-desk exactly like mine, or, I ought to say, poor father's ; but mother said when he died that I was to have it ; so I suppose I may call it mine.'

'All right !' exclaimed Alphonse, pronouncing the familiar English words with the truly guttural sound of Parisian French. '*Eh bien !* these two desks were made in Paris exactly alike ; *la mère* ordered them ; one was for *mon père*, and the other for Uncle Thorne, your father. Do you remember when the desk came to England ?'

'No, I'm sure she cannot,' exclaimed Elise ; 'for I am older than Patty, and I don't remember it being bought even. But your desk, Alphonse, is more shabby than Patty's.'

'Yes, I have used it oftener,' he replied, 'I dare say.'

'Of course you have. Why, I never remember seeing it till after poor mother's death, and then I found it in a box under the bed.'

'And what makes you so careful of it now ?' asked Marie.

'O, because all poor father's letters and papers are in it, and his marriage papers, and the day I was born, and my little brother and sisters, and when they died; and there were some letters from aunt, but I couldn't read them; I thought they were written in French. Is my desk exactly like yours inside, Alphonse?' she asked suddenly.

'No doubt it is,' he replied, opening the desk and scattering the contents on the table. 'Now look,' he added, lifting the front, and taking from it papers and envelopes, all so neatly arranged that it seemed a pity to disturb them, as Patty said. But Alphonse went on, and, opening the under part of the desk, he took out all the carefully tied-up letters and papers, and told Patty to look in.

'There's nothing but emptiness,' said Patty, 'and I can see the desks are both exactly alike. Thank you for showing it me.'

'But I have not shown you all, Patty,' said her cousin, smiling. 'Would you not like to see a few of my secrets?'

'Secrets! what do you mean, Alphonse?' said Patty in a bewildered tone.

'Don't tease her, Alphonse,' said Elise; 'just show her at once.'

‘Now look close, Patty,’ said the young man ; and Patty stared at the rosewood back of the desk, which presented a smooth, blank surface, from the inkstands and pen sills to the bottom of the desk inside. A moment, and then, as Alphonse placed his finger on a certain point in the blank surface, it flew open, and before Patty’s astonished eyes appeared two small but deep drawers, which Alphonse pulled out, and exclaimed with a merry laugh, ‘See, I have not many secrets, Patty!’

Then with alarm the young people rushed forward to prevent Patty from falling. For half a second she had stood as if stunned, and then turned so deathly white that she appeared on the point of fainting. She did not faint, however, but, controlling herself, she said, in a calm but excited voice, pointing to the still open desk, ‘Is my desk *exactly* like yours, Alphonse ? Are you quite, quite sure ?’

‘Yes, I feel sure it is,’ he replied ; and Elise, who had sent Marie to call her mother, threw her arms round Patty, and entreated her to explain what was the matter.

Poor Patty ! the shock had been so sudden, and the hope it excited so glorious, that for a time the girl seemed beside herself. Her open desk stood on the table ; she suddenly flung herself away from the

arms of Elise, and with frantic energy threw out every paper from the back of the desk, and then, turning piteously to her cousin, she said, 'Alphonse, can you open the back of my desk in the same way? O, do try; you don't know what may be in the secret drawers behind it.'

Patty's strange behaviour had made Alphonse nervous; he was more used to the marks on the rosewood in his own desk, and at first his finger wandered with uncertainty on its surface. She was calmer now, and a prayer arose in her heart: 'O Lord, if the papers are here to clear my dear father's character, do let me find them.'

Almost at the same moment the false back flew open. Patty started forward and drew out the drawers, and the next moment, raising her hand, which held a carefully sealed packet, above her head, she read aloud the words that answered her prayer: '*Copy of deed of gift from Sir Edward Wentworth, Bart., to John Thorne.*'

At this moment Madame Christophe and Marie entered the room, and the former in haste and alarm exclaimed,—

'*Ma chère enfant ! oh, quel malheur ! es-tu malade ?*'

'No, no, aunt, only so happy. Dear father's character is quite cleared; I don't care for anything else.'

‘Your father’s character cleared! My child, who has dared to say anything against him?’

‘No one ever did,’ she replied; ‘they couldn’t; it was only some papers were lost, and people wouldn’t believe that Sir Edward Wentworth gave father the cottage, because no papers could be found.’

‘But, *mon enfant*, your father wrote and told me all about it, and said in his letter that he had put the papers away safely in his desk. And have you found them there?’ she continued, pointing to the open desk.

‘Yes, aunty, but I should never have thought about any secret drawers if I hadn’t seen my cousin’s desk.’

‘And if you had not come to stay with us for a week,’ said Elise, smiling.

‘O yes, I forgot that,’ exclaimed Patty.

‘*Eh bien!* and now what about these papers, Patty?’ said her cousin Alphonse. ‘Do you know, I think you ought to have the advice of a lawyer.’

‘Do you?’ she exclaimed; ‘but I don’t know any lawyers here.’

‘I do,’ he replied; ‘and I think, if you would let me take these papers to our principal and show them to him, he will tell you what to do. He understands the English language.’

‘O, thank you, Alphonse,’ replied Patty. ‘Please will you do so? and take them with you now, if you’re

going to your office,' she continued, as she saw her cousin locking his desk and preparing to go out.

'Here is another paper,' cried Patty, who was still very interested in the secret portion of her desk; 'it's about the cottage too, and here's Sir Edward's name on it, and father's.'

Alphonse took possession of the paper, and, folding it carefully, placed it in his pocket-book, and, with the words '*Au revoir*'—'Farewell,' hastily departed.

'Do you know, child,' said Madame, 'I had quite forgotten all about the cottage? Why, if it's yours, you can live in it rent free, or let it, and even sell it. I don't suppose it would be worth much unless there is a large garden.'

'There is, auntie!' exclaimed Patty; 'and chicken-houses, and fruit trees, and such a pretty flower garden. You know father was a gardener, and he did keep it so nice till he became ill!'

'Poor fellow, I dare say he did. However, now you must wait till Alphonse returns and tells us what the advocate says.'

Patty employed herself during the absence of her cousin in packing her boxes and preparing for her return on the morrow to Lady Wentworth's hotel. The message brought by Alphonse from the *avocat* was to this effect: Patty was to lose no time in re-

turning to England, as circumstances might arise to cause a lawsuit if the matter were longer delayed.

‘And must I go back to England all by myself?’ she asked tearfully.

‘No, dear, but don’t be anxious; I’ll go with you myself to-morrow and see Lady Wentworth, and no doubt her ladyship will advise you what to do.’

Lady Wentworth, however, on hearing what had occurred, and being shown the documents, decided to return at once, with her daughters and servants, to England. It was a great relief to that lady’s mind to be able to prove that Sir Edward had been straightforward and true in his dealings with his faithful servant.

‘I must be on the spot, my child,’ she said to Patty; ‘and I will place the matter in my lawyer’s hands as soon as we reach England.’

Those who have lady’s-maids and servants to pack up, and write labels, and do all the fatiguing work of moving and travelling, know but little of its miseries. In less than twenty-four hours Lady Wentworth and her household were seated in the train which left for Boulogne at 10.40. Madame Christophe and her son and daughters had taken leave of Patty at the station with effusive demonstrations, and Madame’s last injunction to Patty was,—

'When you've settled this business about the cottage, Patty, you will come back and live with us, won't you?'

'I will come and see you, auntie, but I can't tell whether I shall be able to stay till I've been to England.'

We need not describe the journey from Paris to London. On arriving, Lady Wentworth sent her two younger daughters and the servants, except Mrs. Lane and Patty, to Parkhurst, having decided to stay at the Langham for a few days to test the validity of the documents now in her possession, and, if necessary, employ counsel on Patty's behalf.

At one time such legal help seemed likely to be needed. On reaching London, Patty had written to her cousin, Sarah Forest, telling her the history of the secret drawers, and why she was in London. One sentence in Sarah's reply greatly startled her :

'I'm glad you are come to England, dear Patty, not only because you've found those tiresome papers, but because now you can stop them from pulling down the dear old White Cottage. There's all the scaffolding still up, but I suppose Sir Thomas was advised to wait a bit by his lawyer; and it's a good job for him and you too, Patty, that he did so.'

Patty showed this letter to Lady Wentworth, who

at once applied to her solicitor for advice. But Sir Thomas, who was beginning to discover that he was losing the respect, not only of his tenants, but of the landed gentry of the neighbourhood, had no intention of going to law against such documents as those now produced. Instead of this, he at once withdrew his claim to the property, and legal proceedings came to an end. Although this act was nothing more than one of moral rectitude, yet it produced a better feeling among the tenantry and workpeople.

There is not much more to tell of Patty Thorne's adventures, but it must be stated that, after the scaffolding had been removed and the cottage and grounds put into thorough repair, she left Lady Wentworth's service, and set up business as a dress-maker, and for nearly a year was very successful. The association with her aunt and cousins Elise and Marie, the feeble efforts she made to imitate the elegant yet simple style for which the French people are so noted, had not been all lost, and their results were seen in the success with which her dressmaking efforts met while in the White Cottage.

But, after having enjoyed the society of her new-found relatives and the vivacity of the people of Paris, Patty began to feel the White Cottage lonely. A letter arrived from her cousin Elise, begging her to

come and stay with them for a few months. It was a great temptation, one that she found impossible to resist, especially with the prospect of learning more of the intricacies of the delicate needlework of which Patty was so fond. She at once sent the letter to Lady Wentworth at Parkhurst, and asked for her kind advice. The answer came speedily.

‘I should feel it a difficult task to advise you, my dear Patty,’ wrote that lady, ‘but that I know you will seek greater and more perfect wisdom from above to guide you in your decision. I know that your father and your aunt were brought up in the fear of God by your grandparents, and that you have been well instructed in the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, and I have every reason to believe that you are under its influence. I know also that you must feel lonely in that little cottage by yourself, and also your great wish to improve in the art of dressmaking, in which Frenchwomen so greatly excel.

‘But, my child, there are gay doings and attractions in the beautiful city of Paris which too often lead to sin, to forgetfulness of God, and to neglect of prayer. But from what I have seen of your conduct during the three months of your stay in Paris, and of your aunt’s family, I think a residence with your aunt, to acquire some knowledge of her business, is as safe

for you, or even more so, than to go into a house of business in London or elsewhere. Never forget that short but comprehensive prayer of the Psalmist: "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

Patty's reply to Lady Wentworth was read with tears of thankfulness by that lady; and a few weeks after, Patty, having let the cottage and ground to a respectable tenant, and sold her furniture, took leave of her Aunt Forest and her cousins amidst many tears on both sides, and started for Paris, feeling scarcely able to decide whether she was happy or miserable at the prospect of leaving dear old England, the home of her birth.

Eight years have passed since that day. For five of these years Patty, now designated *Mademoiselle* Thorne, assisted her aunt, and became so proficient in the business that, as one after the other of Madame Christophe's daughters married, and Madame's own health failed, she became sole manager, and, at her aunt's death, found herself, in her twenty-third year, sole mistress of the establishment by the will of that kind relative.

After a while came a change. Alphonse had obtained a lucrative engagement in England. Patty also had a longing to return to the dear old country.

The business in the Rue St. Honoré was disposed of to advantage, and within a year from that time might have been seen in a street at the West End a magnificent shop, with the words over it,—

MADAME CHRISTOPHE.

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Patty Thorne had come home to dear old England and married her cousin Alphonse.

She was not forgotten by Lady Wentworth. The wedding dresses of Miss Wentworth and Miss Ethel were prepared in Madame Christophe's establishment, and greatly admired for their richness and elegance.

Patty, with all her success, continued her straightforward and honourable conduct, and Lady Wentworth, when speaking of her, would say,—

‘Madame Christophe’s career is one of the strongest testimonies to the truth of the text: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” What but Patty’s early training could have preserved a young and attractive girl from the dangerous folly and gaiety which surrounded her in the beautiful city of Paris?’

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